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THE GOSPEL OF PAIN

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS
PORTUGAL ST. LINCOLN'S INN, W.C.
CAMBRIDGE: DEIGHTON, BELL & CO.
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN CO.
BOMBAY: A. H. WHEELER & CO.

THE GOSPEL OF PAIN

BY

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B.A. (CANTAB.)

He hath set Eternity in their hearts.

Eccles. iii, 11 (trans. Delitzsch)

LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

1908

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CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

PREFACE

THE fact of suffering has been treated on many sides as a mystery which it is desirable to harmonize with belief in a wisely ordered world. The standpoint taken in the following pages is rather different from this. Their object is to show that suffering is less a field for the exercise of philosophic speculation than the common and central ground of life itself, where alone may be found an indication of life's purpose, and consequently of its conduct.

The author addresses himself mainly to those who have been forced into an "agnostic" position, not so much by argument as by experience of the sinister aspects of life. To that experience he ventures to oppose another experience; to remind them that if the fact of suffering makes so powerful an impression upon us, it is only reasonable that the conduct of many sufferers under their suffering should have equal weight; and to inquire into the causes of that conduct as possibly affording a clue to the practical problems of our nature and destiny.

T. J. H.

March, 1908.

WERE it not thus, O King of my salvation,
Many would curse to thee and I for one,
Fling thee thy bliss and snatch at thy damnation,
Scorn and abhor the rising of the sun.

Ring with the reckless shivering of laughter
Wroth at the woe which thou hast seen so long,
Question if any recompense hereafter
Waits to atone the intolerable wrong.

Is there not wrong too bitter for atoning?
What are these desperate and hideous years?
Hast thou not heard thy whole creation groaning,
Sighs of the bondsman, and a woman's tears?

F. W. H. MYERS,
St. Paul.

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THE GOSPEL OF PAIN

I

THE PRESENT UNREST

We come into the world with the gift of placing ourselves, so to speak, on the side of the Creator, of surveying His work; and yet we cannot guess what is in His heart; the stern and majestic eyes of nature behold us stonily, permitting us to make question, to explore, to investigate, but withholding the secret. And in the light of those inscrutable eyes, how weak and arrogant appear our dogmatic systems of religion, that would profess to read and define the very purposes of God: our dearest conceptions of morality, our pathetic principles, pale and fade before these gigantic indications of mysterious indifferent energy.—*The Thread of Gold.*

I

TO-DAY it is not a doctrine or a dogma, but life itself that is challenged. The term "modern doubt," so frequently in use a couple of decades ago, is seldom on our lips to-day. It has passed out of use because it no longer voices the feeling that gave rise to it. Speaking

generally, our unrest is not doubt at all. It is not caused by a misgiving about the accuracy of the Mosaic Cosmogony or the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. It is not occasioned by the rival claims of churches or religions as interpreters of life. Our unrest, indeed, is rather of the nature of a conviction than a doubt, at least of a profound suspicion that all interpretations of life are alike futile; that life does not admit of interpretation.

That this state of feeling is not a novelty in the history of the race hardly needs admitting. Echoes of it are audible in the great literatures of the world. If the object before us were other than it is, it would be interesting to compare the various waves—or intakes—of misgiving which have registered their presence on the shores of time. In that case the temporal condition of peoples so affected, their previous beliefs and their subsequent fortunes, the average resistance of human energy to the corrosive of ultimate questions, would engage our attention, and from the detached standpoint of the historian few themes could be more fascinating. Our survey, however, is a much narrower one. It is confined to the unrest of our own day, and —to draw the line closer still—to that unrest

as it presents itself to one who is forced by the tragedy of life to turn this way and that in search of some clue to what seems to him incredible.

2

Among the first facts to arrest the seeker as he looks into the minds of those about him is the susceptibility to suffering which he perceives on all hands. Everywhere he finds his own bitterness reflected and his eager questions borne back on varying echoes. Is this sensibility more intense among us to-day than classical expressions warrant our supposing it to have been in the past? Certainly it is more widespread, and naturally so. Never before have there been so many peoples at approximately the same level of thought and feeling at the same time. Never before, also, has an interchange of ideas been so easy and so prevalent. Where one or two in the world's yesterdays felt and proclaimed life to be a riddle, millions feel it to be so to-day, and are more or less capable of voicing their feelings. And there is nothing in this but what is natural and healthy. What one has felt, if there be a grain of reality in it, the whole world will feel sooner or later. Obviously, like every other trait, this

sensibility is capable of exaggeration, but it can only be termed morbid by those who are blind to the human standpoint, who forget that this very sensitiveness is among the qualities that remove man from the non-reflective instinct of grosser natures. It is not sympathy, but apathy, that de-humanizes us. Our widespread sensitiveness to suffering, therefore, so far from being, as some would have us believe, a symptom of senile decay, only indicates a drawing closer together of the strands of human experience, and as such is a good and not an evil.

That this means a raising of our active humanity is a question apart. Unfortunately "pity" is still possible without "relief." But to have achieved a higher average of sensibility alone is an advance towards the completion of the human ideal, for the simple reason that it involves a higher estimate of the individual. Take a simple illustration. During the late war the writer chanced to overhear a fragment of conversation in Kensington Gardens. Some persons were seated near who had just witnessed the departure of a detachment for the front, and the talk turned on the provision made nowadays for the soldier's comfort. "I wonder how it is," said one of the party, an old

man, "that we seem to think such a lot of the *soldiers* nowadays; it's quite different from what used to be. We used to talk about the 'Army,' but now it's all the Tommys." The reflection was simple enough, yet it set one thinking. In spite of Tennyson's dark prophecy, it is the "individual" that is becoming more and more. Under Marlborough, and even Wellington, the dashing achievements of our army counted for more, in the public mind, than the hardships and sufferings of those by whom they were won. To-day public interest is not less patriotic, but it is more—to coin a term—participant. And the change thus indicated holds good all along the line. By a great variety of causes, from the anti-slavery movement to the vogue of modern fiction, there has taken place a quickening of the imaginative sympathy which is among the most remarkable things of modern times. We are nearer to each other, even those of us who are careless and irresponsible; our interests are less abstract, our fellowship is more inquisitive, our vision more detailed and minute.

Obviously, however, this refinement of the sensibility, while it makes for the realization of the human ideal, also profoundly increases our dissatisfaction with life. It is bound to do

so, because it owes its very existence to the hardship of the human lot. It would seem as though sympathy, once called into being, develops more rapidly than any other power of heart or mind. Once exercised, it finds a thousand doors open to its perception, and not content with its own species, it takes up the burden of others till it comes at length with a loud and desolate cry to the gates of life itself. Our fathers could unearth fossils without starting awkward questions as to the meaning of existence; but the author of the "Thread of Gold," in the passage that heads these reflections, finds a whole "unintelligible world" within the ribs of a diplodocus. For ages the "flower in the crannied wall" was passed unheeded, till the poet found it vocal with the cry of his own heart. Springs have come and autumns withered, and no man asked why so much beauty should annually fall, never again individually to bloom. The amazing fertility of nature, altogether past her power of bringing to maturity, has been a commonplace for ages without its prodigality and pathos being once perceived. Night after night the inhabitants of this planet have viewed their probable fate in the shape of an extinct cinder suspended above them; they have in-

voked it, they have worshipped it; yet not till recently have they wondered what heroes lie in its icy graveyards, and why they were born to die. Let once the scales fall from our eyes in respect of any fragment of the pathos of the world, and almost immediately we perceive a whole creation groaning and travailing together in pain.

3

The reminder that the pathway of our extended sympathies has been largely marked out by the researches of science brings into view another element peculiar to the unrest of the times. Our conception of the vastness of the universe is due, in its entirety, to the discoveries of the last sixty or seventy years. That conception could not be completed until geology had done for Time what astronomy had previously done for our notion of Space. And the abyss of Time is fraught with far more dismay for the beholder than the abyss of Space. Astronomy did little to disturb the egoism of our species. The unveiling of vast tracts of space where countless systems revolve round countless suns still left Man the conceivable centre of existence. It was as possible in the early days of the last century for the

devout scientist to believe that "he had been destined, before earth and heaven were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when earth and heaven should have passed away," as it was for Macaulay's Puritan a century or so before him. But with the advent of geology Man was decentralized. The utmost history of his race scarce counted compared with that of races long extinct, while the very scene of these incredible aeons was but a parvenu amid unnumbered suns, themselves the reconstructed forms of ancient matter. Moreover, all the religions whence man drew his hope were full of the thought of the vastness of Space, and every new discovery there, while it increased a grateful humility, yet magnified his estate as the peculiar care of Him who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them by their names. When, however, the rocks were opened and the ages gave up their dead, and the whole activities of space were recognized as combinations and disintegrations of a chemical process not essentially differing from the sputterings in a test tube, the reflection "What is man that thou art mindful of him" gained a new and ironic significance. And when, further, man's ancestry was traced to beast and reptile, his

high morality to custom, and his custom to habits of the flock and the herd, what wonder that the shudder of a great misgiving penetrated the recesses of faith and hope, lest the soul, that immortal part that prayed and loved and trusted, together with its God and its eternal weight of glory, should prove but a function of the brain, the mere psychic reflex of cellular change.

It is not, however, so much what science has told us, as what she has not told us that contributes a distinctive element in our unrest. We are suffering the reaction from a day which dawned full of hope, and ended for many in bitter disappointment. Sixty years or so ago it seemed as though a new dispensation was at the doors. A wave of intellectual impulse which had been gathering long and obscurely suddenly crested and broke, invading the whole coast-line of knowledge, and filling recesses hitherto impregnable with fruitful seethe and turmoil. And, for a time, while the tide was at flood, men were carried away as by a new thing under the sun. Every brilliant generalization seemed an advance towards life's secret. Ultimate questions, which, in course of this activity,

were inevitably divested of their old-time answers and laid bare to the approach of reason, were about to receive a new and infallible answer. Knowledge was to be high-priest of a rational religion, and, in the application of the evolutionary theory to ethics, it did indeed seem as though Law and Gospel were superseded. A philosophy securely based on a unification of knowledge was in course of construction. On the other side of the water the torch of a new religion momentarily blazed. For a time all was excitement. Men wrought and inquired in the serious belief that the Golden Age had dawned. The sanguine—sometimes, it must be confessed, the smug—temper of the *saeculum realisticum* has its echoes even now.

And then, in proportion as the "movement" was purely intellectual, reaction was swift. "What," men began asking, "does it all amount to? amount to with regard to life, its purpose and its conduct?" The most fascinating generalizations of science as well as its real contributions to knowledge only served to show how bounded after all was its horizon. For what answer had the new knowledge to give, *e.g.*, to the old question, "What is the chief end of man?" That question is for ever pertinent,

since life demands of every man and woman an answer to it—in practice if not in theory; and, though it may seem to us to-day incongruous to propose such a question to the exponents of "exact thought," it did not seem so five-and-twenty years ago. They had in a manner invited it. In the application of their method they had invaded regions whence the old-world answer to that question drew its strength. They had ruthlessly analyzed all they found there, and left very little that could come up to the new standard of intellectual assent. Further, their brilliant achievements in their own line had put a premium on purely intellectual method. If they did not, as a preceding generation had done, enthrone Reason in the stead of Faith, it was because the Spirit of the Age was more subtle and less theatrical. But this very subtlety secured a wider recognition of the sovereignty of the organ they advocated. What result then did their method yield on this vital question as to "the chief end of man"? No result whatever. The foremost exponents of the method were the first to assert, with all the circumstance of religious fervour, that with ultimate questions Science had nothing to do, that her activities were limited to appearances, and had no com-

merce with what might be supposed to lie behind them. The outcome, then, of the entire "intellectual movement," so far as the purpose of life, the problem of suffering, the possibility of a future, and the existence of a God, are concerned, was the coining of the term, "Agnostic."[1]

And yet no: not entirely so. Incapable as Science conceived herself to be—whether rightly or wrongly is a question apart—of answering the last passionate questionings of the soul, she at least achieved this much for the domain in which she frankly disclaimed authority; she cleared away an immense impeding mass of

[1] The writer is, of course, here speaking of the broad result of a movement, and not of the teaching of Science as it presents itself to the devout mind. The distinction is worth pointing out. The late Lord Kelvin, to whose rank among men of Science it is hardly necessary to allude, in a speech delivered at University College, said: "Science positively affirms creative power. . . . It is not in dead matter that we live and move and have our being, but in the creating and directive power which science compels us to accept as an article of belief. . . . We only know God in His works, but we are absolutely forced by science to admit and to *believe with confidence* in a directive power—in an influence other than physical dynamical, electrical forces." And Lord Kelvin was not alone among the leaders of Science to make such an assertion.

conjecture which had been dignified by the name of Belief, and thus greatly simplified the issue. What we men and women really want to know is *whether life itself contains any definite indication that the struggle which it involves is worth while.* So long as the air was filled with tradition and metaphysical conjecture hardly less alien to the exigences of life than those of the seraphic doctor, the real issue was impeded. The intellectual movement, pursuing its victorious analysis eliminated in a great measure what was fantastic and sectarian. We only realize of how much the scientific movement has relieved us when we peruse such a work as the "History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century." We may be no whit nearer what is called "ultimate truth," but at least we are free from certain obscuring errors. It is less perplexing to seek one's way in an open plain than in a wood, and in the daytime than by night.

In the second place the intellectual movement was beneficial in insisting on clear thinking and logical statement. No doubt in so doing it pressed beyond its own mark, and invested the syllogism with a prerogative beyond the scope of mortal device. Yet it was good. It

black-balled the untidy mind. It rendered more nervous and exacting our sense of truth. It quickened our perception of the difference between the credible and the incredible. While, then, the intellectual movement cancelled much of what was called Belief, without providing any substitute, it has at least simplified the problem, and rendered the intelligence that has to grapple with it keener and more delicate.

4

It may well be wondered why no one has taken in hand some Studies in Reaction, because it seems so plain that one great cause of human restlessness is our bondage to extremes. The thing we call "progress" is, to be sure, a succession of reactions, but why we should continually leap from one extreme to the other without taking stock of what we have learned, or garnering the grains of truth which a whole epoch has yielded, is a thing yet to be explained. Perhaps that is why we have to say of progress as they said of the great Congress of Vienna, "Il danse, mais il ne marche pas." We are now, for example, living in the very heyday of reaction. Except in severely technical quarters "exact thought" is taboo. And yet the concentrated energies of sixty years surely had something to contribute

to our stock of experience! Why should we disregard their clearness of vision and keenness of method, simply because we have naturally reacted from their limitations?

It thus transpires that, among a multitude of recrudescences, we have to-day a kind of mysticism[1] which bids fair, in the hands of one or two men of genius, to take the stage for the time being. This is exactly what anyone would have foreseen, for when the lesson books are put away the fairy books are got out. The change is natural, and in many ways beneficial, and no one would deny that fairy lore has its function, and that "grown ups" are, on the whole, more in need of it than are children. That, however, is beside the mark, for the modern mystics have no more intention of providing us with a little romantic relaxation than the straitest sect has of figuring as a side issue. Undogmatic though they be, the mystics are nothing if not serious. The cult is, to parody a famous phrase, Quakerism minus Christianity.

[1] It will be understood that in using this expression the author casts no slur on Catholic mysticism, such as that of Madame Guyon or William Law. It is unfortunate that there is no other term to express the modern thing here treated.

It takes its stand upon the "neutral zone," where black and white are identical, and the old oppositions of thought vanish in fine haze. Clear thinking and logical statement are in this domain cardinal sins. The only intellectual virtue left us is to think obscurely and state inconsequently. And of this virtue our mystics certainly are paragons. For inconsequence and obscurity we only meet their like in Mr. Flosky of "Nightmare Abbey," and in the eighth chapter of the "Life of Sterling." They employ, however, a medium so exquisite, a style so delicate and fastidious, that it is philistine to quarrel with them. And yet in applying the mere brutal test of common sense, what is one to do? For as an answer to the passionate longing of the soul for some sane indication of hope, mysticism has nothing more to offer than has "exact thought." The true test of a mystic is that, for him, the very mystery of life makes life worth living. As we have been lately told, when asked that hackneyed question, he exclaims triumphantly: "Crimson Toadstools!" Of course, if these things were written for our amusement, it would be gratuitous and even cruel to reduce them to absurdity; but, as already said, the mystic means us to take him

seriously, and taken seriously, his contribution to the problem is vitiated by a curious fallacy. He does not realize that "mystery" is not a solution, but only a re-dressing of life's problem. That is why so much of mystic literature is mere wearisome tautology. When, *e.g.*, we read in Maeterlinck that "the first kiss of the betrothed is but the seal which thousands of hands, craving for birth, have impressed upon the lips of the mother they desire"; or, "we know the dead do not die. We know that it is not in our churches that they are to be found, but in the houses and habits of us all," we find nothing but a picturesque way of putting certain obvious physiological and psychological facts. This, it may be objected, only proves the writer to be outside the *âmes bien nées* to whom the mystic appeals. Still, the raptures of the Saints were visible to Ignorance though he was constitutionally unable to share them, and surely one may claim at least to perceive what is gained by merely re-clothing the facts of life in beautiful language and arresting metaphor? If we are in doubt whether our food is poisoned, it does not help us to hold up to our gaze a beautiful picture of the doubtful feast. The art of the mystic has taken the place of the analysis

of twenty years ago, and the artist has fed us no more than the chemist. Or is it the mystic's mission to charm us into a waking slumber by fixing our gaze alone on the beautiful and desirable? Disregarding George Eliot's warning—which, after all, belongs to the Philistine decades—does he believe that "moral opiates" are the only thing left? If so, he leaves one thing out of the reckoning—human nature. People who hasten to the burning shaft with the names of husbands and sons on their lips are not easily "charmed" from the grim alternative. An acrobatic performance at the pit's mouth would not draw a copper; and while a trade might be done in cyanide of potassium, the lotus eaters would be few. It is just this grim alternative which the mystic never takes into account. Suppose the light of our long-abided revelation should flash at length on the gloomy walls of an inferno! That is a supposition which the mystic never entertains. His whole doctrine—if it be a doctrine—centres in a sublime disregard of it. Perhaps he is constitutionally incapable of entertaining it. If so he is happy. But he is also perfectly useless to men and women who see in life's "mystery" the possibility of such a sinister revelation, nay,

whose acquaintance with intolerable facts seems not far short of such a revelation already.

5

It may fairly be assumed that when the divinities of Olympus paled and disappeared there were no Robert Elsmeres among the priests of Jupiter. And this for the simple reason that no claim was made for the gods on the intellect of the worshippers. Even when Julian attempted his fantastic revival, the only propaganda available were ritual and the abuse of Christianity. A Pagan Evidence Society was not to be thought of, for there was no intellectual stuff out of which to construct it. With Christianity, on the contrary, it was different from the first. Its position among the religions of the world is unique in the use it has all along made of knowledge, and its continuous appeal to reason. It has been the fashion of late with some to overlook this salient feature in Christianity. It is neither acceptable to those propagandists who would claim a monopoly of reason, nor to the misty brethren who do not want the claims of common sense admitted. None the less it is the fact that Christianity is, in a unique sense, a religion of reason. Saul of Tarsus dipped his pen into the fountains of

contemporary knowledge, and clothed his interpretation of the Cross in the garb of what was then "modern thought." In so doing he created a tradition which has never been disregarded. Indeed the tendency has too often been in the opposite direction, that of a descent from the lofty heights of a direct spiritual appeal to the prosaic plains of wordy contention. The Church's frequent opposition to intellectual inquiry, so far from detracting from her rational quality, establishes it. Had she not shown a sufficiently high appreciation of philosophy jealously to guard her own conceptions, she would have treated a Bruno and a Galileo with indifference. It was intellectual solicitude and not spiritual instinct that prompted her to fence secular inquiry with the rack and the stake. Her early "apologies," *i.e.*, "accounts" of her origin and ethos, the formulation of her creeds, her polemics against heresy, her less justifiable proceedings in the same direction, and, since the days of "Cur Deus homo," her apologetics in the wider and modern sense, all evince the severely intellectual character of the religion which was destined to meet the shock of an intellectual inquiry without parallel in the world's history.

The strength of Christianity—apart from the spiritual thing it is in itself—lay in the wholeness of its appeal to human nature. Other religions appealed to the emotions, others disciplined the will; Christianity, as well as sounding the depths of sorrow and of joy, as well as "contending for the prize," alone responded to "the discerning intellect of man." So far she was singularly equipped to achieve the spiritual task her Founder appointed. Unfortunately the unique element in her strength became her weakness. The fusion of a knowledge at best relative and provisional with a purely spiritual experience betrayed the latter to the corrosive of inquiry. By this it is not meant that the formulation of a creed was impolitic; the formulation of a creed was inevitable; and, further, a creed cannot be formulated with a view to its being provisional and temporary. A creed is an assemblage of convictions which men, when they come by them, conceive to be matters of life and death. Finality is and must be the "note" of a creed. And yet creeds, while they are the servants or even the conservators of spirituality, have also a tendency to intellectualize the soul, to exalt finite statement to the level of eternal experience. And frequently in the

history of Christianity the temper of faith, the upward look, the spiritual loyalty and trust which it was her mission to disseminate were obscured by the rigidity of an intellectual system.

For the student of history, and especially of what is sometimes called the "conflict between religion and science" in recent times, will find that it was not so much the creed, in its specific sense, with which the intellectual movement came into collision, as with systematized and exhaustive conceptions of the world and man's place in it. The ranks of scepticism have been most brilliantly and perhaps most liberally recruited from a nonconformity which, owing its existence to a centralization of the Bible, viewed the whole world through the medium of Hebrew tradition. It is not improbable that if Dante had been a Presbyterian the shock of Copernicanism would have slain the "Divine Comedy" in its inception. It is to what is known as "systematic theology" rather than to the existence of a firm but spiritual creed that the later havoc of "free inquiry" is due. If the theologian protested against the intrusion, the blame certainly did not lie with the intruders. They had no alternative, short of closing their inquiry,

but to assail intellectual theories to which Christianity stood committed. They found no avenue of knowledge which Christianity had not made its own, and no portal of darkness on which it had not set the Divine seal. To pursue physical inquiries without doing violence to Christian belief was a task as impossible as Shylock's. When, a century earlier, Wesley forewent physical studies from a dread of atheism, he manifested a precocious shrewdness which was justified of its children. Men of the unslumbering logic of Newman saw the peril the Church was in, and deliberately sought refuge in Authority. Others retreated even further into the purely spiritual significance of the faith as the only defence that promised security. And to-day no one will deny that the Church shares in a great measure the intellectual unrest of those outside her.

The din of battle is largely hushed. We live on the morrow of a great strife. When "exact thought" confessed itself "agnostic," it *ipso facto* retired—we will not say "retreated"—from the battle. Two armies cannot fight except on the same ground, and the declaration of the agnostic meant that he and the religious leaders occupied different planes. It is possible for two

men to discuss the colour of the chameleon endlessly, but it is not possible, or not possible for long, for them to argue if one of them takes up the position that neither of them knows what he is talking about. In that case the only dignified, and, indeed, practical thing, is for both of them to go and find something to do. Meanwhile, reaction had set in, and the spectators were leaving the ground while the combatants were disputing whether or no they could logically quarrel. Men and women's personal and perennial interest lies, not in science, but what Science can or cannot tell them about love and God and the future and the present; lies in the answer to the question whether life itself contains any ground for hope and upward striving; and when Science frankly said, "We don't know," the interest in scientific generalizations was sensibly and suddenly diminished.

The condition of things, however, on the cessation of hostilities can hardly be called a state of peace. The history of the nineteenth century cannot be concluded in the words: "Then had the churches rest." Unquestionably there are numbers within them who have found rest. Indeed, it may be thought that the whole of this estimate of our unrest is exaggerated.

Undoubtedly there are numbers of men whose reflections are naturally directed into healthy and spiritual channels, and are undisturbed by the seethe and turmoil of the Age. We are, however, engaged not in considering our Age as a whole, but one feature of it—that of unrest. And no one with any just appreciation of his day will deny that there are hundreds of men, and especially of young men, who might be very giants in the cause of righteousness and purity, but who are inefficient because they find no solid ground beneath their feet. Year by year, we are told, the number of candidates for Holy Orders, and in the broader and more acceptable sense of "going into the church," in the sense of lay activity, the number of those who volunteer is absolutely disproportionate to the eligible totality. Various reasons are assigned for these phenomena, and there may be some cogency in all such; but probing deeply, do we not find at the root of the matter a kind of spiritual paralysis? Neither insufficient remuneration, nor the absence of remuneration, nor insecurity of tenure, nor delay of promotion, would withhold an Englishman from doing his duty. Men fight for their country on a bare subsistence, and with no prospect before them

save death or a penurious old age. Are educated men behind the common soldier in their recognition of duty? Men fight because the Country is a reality, because the flag flies and the marching orders are clear. And if men withhold themselves from moral effort it is because the City of God and the Cross are lost in haze, because when all seems indefinite, uncertain, a mere balance of equally poised probabilities, high moral effort is impossible.

The writer does not share the spiritual hysteria of those who see in this kind of thing a "sign of the End"; but neither does he share the complaisance of those who see in it a sign of progress. For if by progress we mean advance from a spiritually lower to a spiritually higher, it is obviously a good thing that there should be communities to foster this advance, and a bad thing when members of such communities are forced either to quit their allegiance or do despite to their understanding. No one but an empty theorist would deny that the spiritual life of one individual is to a very great extent dependent on the response it finds in the spiritual life of others. There is a sense in which the individual is everything; there is a sense in which he is nothing. And in the

spiritual world the eternal paradox of the individual and the social unit gains its most emphatic expression. The man who sets about to produce all his own requirements is likely to live an impoverished life; the man who is left to devise his own sacraments is likely to succeed only with that of extreme unction.

Upon the whole, the Church, sharing the general reaction from the purely intellectual, is too much inclined to be content with the emotional grip. To her restless adherents she speaks very tenderly, it is true, but she insists too much on the silence which science maintains in regard to the ultimate questions of life. She rests too much on the negation of intellectualism. "Quit us," she says, "and you are plunged into negation, or something not practically distinguishable from it. You forfeit all that renders life sacred, lovable, liveable. Why isolate yourselves from a communion where, after all, your heart will always be, and where you may at least be sure of a sympathy with spiritual aspirations which you can never find amid the loud secularities of the uncloistered world." All this is genuine enough; and in a manner, true; and yet, as the weary heart listens and complies, the unrest remains.

It remains, because men and women need something more central than the emotions, more sure than the wistful mood of aspiration. They do not require "demonstration" or "logical proof"; they have reacted from "schemes" and "systems"; but conviction they do want. They want assurance on common-sense grounds. Such grounds they have in practical life, where no one pays a thought to logic or waits a moment for demonstration. Are they to be blamed for requiring such in religion? Granted one conviction, brought out of the facts of life, one clear hint of order and purpose, and the spiritual assurance of the "ages of faith" might again inspire the world.

6

The refinement of sensibility, to which, as we saw, our vivid realization of the problems of life is due, is also the prime cause of our social unrest. Modern democracy is essentially a product of the higher value of the individual. Socialism, while negatively a demand for the restricted freedom of the individual, is, positively, a plea for the freedom and fulfilment of individual life.

The intellectual unrest and the social unrest are related by some as cause and effect. Some

religious persons, for example, are fond of tracing the social upheaval to the undermining of religious sanction by intellectual criticism. The fact, however, that these are often the very persons who find social innovation unwelcome detracts from the value of their opinion. On the other hand, those who see in the religious disturbance only a reflection of economic and social changes usually proceed on the equally vitiating assumption that religion is merely a department of social life. Both views are superficial. Whatever may be the reader's personal attitude towards these forms of unrest, a broad and reasonable conception of mankind and history will convince him that neither stands related to the other as cause or effect.

No doubt their relations are complex, their reactions subtle, and the task of justly defining them is one which the future historian can alone hope to accomplish. Generally speaking, however, both are expressions of a still deeper unrest, of the spiritual longings which under many strange guises are stirring men's hearts in this age as perhaps they have never stirred them before. Take, for example, the agitation familiar as the "social movement": to what is it traceable? Superficially, to the pressure of the

economic situation, but ultimately, to the fact that man the individual has not yet reconciled himself to man the social unit. And this fact belongs to quite a different category from social facts; it belongs to the fundamental nature of man, and the whole handling of it depends on a clear idea of what that nature is. Ultimately, then, the solution of the social problem turns on man's ability to fulfil the paradox of losing his life to find it; of satisfying completely and finally the individual and the social equation within him. Take, again, the complement in the religious world of the social movement outside, the plea from countless pulpits for considerateness and responsibility, and the actual experiments in social union. Is it adequate to term these the reflex of the social movement? Did they figure, did anything like them figure in the religions of those races that have experienced this stress in the past? Do they not spring from the renewed vitality of an ideal of life, a conception of man's nature, a conception and ideal which had their origin not in the economic turmoil of crowded Rome, but amid the pastoral solitude of Galilee? The religious and social problems are related not as cause and effect, but as springing from a common

spiritual discontent. And once the co-efficient of that discontent were fixed and clear, we might look with some hope to the task of social reformers.

To the mind of St. Paul, to the mind of Him whose ideal St. Paul seized and worked out in the practical government of society, it was perfectly clear what was the fundamental nature of man. To give themselves in the service of others, in the completion of the welfare of the whole, presented no difficulty to them, because in this lay the very fulfilment of the spiritual instinct. Both succeeded. It cost them their lives, but that was because the paradox and the spiritual conception out of which it arose were then unrecognized. It would cost men their lives to-day in the shape of voluntary limitations and restrictions, for it is eternally true that he who "saves others cannot save himself," that service is a transference of life from the individual to the State, and that the chance of receiving an equivalent in service re-rendered depends entirely on the number of persons in the State actuated by the same motive. The least religious of us would, I think, be prepared to admit that in a society composed of men like Jesus Christ, the social problem would

be eliminated. The fact that society is not thus composed, that we do not put into force our very clear conceptions of social autonomy, is due to the fact that we have not the conviction which Jesus exercised.

Our unrest, then, may be said to consist in the intellectual problem on the one hand, and the practical problem on the other. Both these have to do with the fact of suffering. Both follow on our increased sensibility. Here, however, a great difference between the two arises; for while the solution of the one consists in reconciling the fact of suffering with a justice latent within us, the solution of the other, in the absence of information to the contrary, lies in eliminating the fact of suffering, or, at least, in reducing it to a minimum. We know, however, to begin with, that greatly as suffering may be reduced, complete as may ultimately be our elimination of the causes of social friction, the burden of human suffering never can be entirely removed, since a vast proportion of it is due to causes out of our control. By so much then as the social problem is relieved will the intellectual problem be increased; that is to say, when we have done all in our power for the promotion of human welfare, we shall still

need, to cover the whole of the facts, an interpretation of life.

Reformers say that they cannot wait for such interpretation; that needs are pressing, that their province is not that of the doctrinaire or the divine, but of the practical politician. Not only is there some truth in this, but the social fabric is so vast that some of its work can be done without the builders having any idea of its purpose as a whole. At the same time they are laid open to all the risk of a short-sighted aim. Suppose in our ignorance of the general design our walls prove too light to sustain the weight they are destined to carry. Suppose the very fount of our zeal, our sensibility to suffering, leads us to place an emphasis on material welfare which will by and by turn out inadequate for the real purpose and function of life. In that case not only will the work as regards the State have to be done over again, but in the meantime many individual lives will have been ruined either by seeking their good in material conditions, or by a corroding discontent that those conditions are out of their reach.

Is not this precisely the effect which we see all round us to-day of an uninformed sensitiveness to suffering? We are well enough aware

of the results on the State of indiscriminate charity, surely we might learn from them something of the danger of indiscriminately proclaiming the finality of comfort! Model cottages and garden cities are in their way excellent, and it may be ultimately possible so completely to "return to nature," that nature will have lost half its charm in losing all its contrast; but the model dwelling cannot close its doors against sorrow, nor can the garden city exclude the thing which got into the other garden; and, meanwhile, what are we to tell those who dwell in cities that are not gardens, and dwellings that were "model" a little while ago? Are we to tell them with the frankness which our materializing tendencies imply that virtue and patience are products of environment, that heroism and love are only possible amid "elevating" surroundings? Tell them so, let a society for the promotion of social statics visit with this exhilarating gospel the slums of any big town, and in hundreds of thousands of cases it will there find the very qualities it denies which old and young are patiently exercising day by day without even a suspicion that they are the envy of princes.

To turn this round into an argument for slum-

life, and cry: "let us continue in sin, that grace may abound!" is a manœuvre which only the ultra-evolutionist, retiring on his own premises, will make. We have already admitted that the materialist's good is an obvious good—so far as it goes. But materialization—it is a kind of religion with us to-day—means something quite other than the desire to see the populace well housed and in work; it means, at the heart of it, the elimination of whatever is adverse. It means that pain and sorrow and misfortune are alien to our proper humanity. It means that the solution of the social problem consists in the elimination of suffering. This, in the absence of any spiritual interpretation of life, is the only doctrine men have to work from. They may be unconscious of it; they may deliberately deny it, but are they able to show from the practical working out of their philanthropy that they have any other aim, any other message for man? Their only object is the finality of comfort. And it is an object which is entirely untrue.

It is untrue in itself, for it is obviously not necessary for the highest development of human life that suffering should be eliminated. But it is positively mischievous in its bearings and results. It robs multitudes whose condition we

cannot hope within their lifetime to ameliorate of the only incentives they have to a virile life. It places endurance at a discount, and enthrones circumstance above will. It excuses crime, and saps goodness of its virtue. It robs ambition of control, and misfortune of consolation. It is the defence of drunkenness, and the apology for prostitution. At its whisper, "incompatibility of temperament" wrecks our homes, and unreflecting haste ruins them in the making. But never is its delusion so manifest as when it defeats its own ends, when it turns against the very sentiment that gave it birth, when it affords the strong an argument for trampling the weak, the rich for being richer, when it puts out the eyes of pity, and takes the heart out of charity, when it cries "hold!" to the one in the same breath in which it says "seize!" to the other. Surely there never was abroad on the earth such a sower of discord as the doctrine of the elimination of suffering! Whence does it spring? From that very sensibility to suffering, which is our highest mark of progress, and yet which, uninformed and undisciplined by any interpretation of life, is debased into a mere procurer of pleasure or a nightmare of diseased imagination.

Is it not, then, reasonable to assume that our social solicitude turns, for its efficiency, on our answer to the question: "What is your life?" And by the term "social solicitude" is meant not merely our attitude to this or that movement or endeavour, but the whole of the social activity in which our daily responsibilities involve us. Here, again, we must guard against a headlong logic which would interpret this as a plea for inaction. Fortunately, life corrects logic. It compels us forward, and the fact that it does so is perhaps the strongest assurance that it contains somewhere for us the secret of the riddle of the world. Obliged to act, we are obliged to hope; but what is our hope?

7

Who is to say to the sufferer, to the unfortunate, to the soul sick and reeling from the tragedy of life, "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be strong, and He shall establish thine heart"? Of that Lord our science knows nothing, and our mysticism knows nothing. To be told that the sum of human happiness exceeds the individual ills is no consolation to those who feel that a world of rapture could not atone for one crushed or wasted life, nor explain it, nor reconcile us with the scheme that admitted of it.

To say "Wait" has no virtue. We have to wait. The question is, in what temper shall we wait. No doubt we can endure, for men with no more light than is ours have endured before us. But what is to bring us that willing and glad co-operation with life, without which in no full sense can we be said to live? "To live again in lives made better by our presence"? high as is the aspiration it is sadly true that no incentive can it produce if the last and perfected product of heroes and martyrs is to be "cast as rubbish to the void." To "love goodness for its own sake"? that is capable of being the loftiest privilege of our nature, but we must first know what "goodness" is; for if it be the mere abstract of certain accommodations framed in the counsels of the herd and the flock, it is a chimera. If there is nothing beyond it, no Thought Eternal that uttered it, if the universe be non-moral, as the tragedy of life seems to confess, then "goodness" is a mere social phase, and love itself a convention that will perish in the dust of stars.

And so again we come to that question which is on the lips of men and women to-day; whether life itself contains any indication that the struggle it involves is worth while. In the

answer to that question, could it be found, it is conceivable that we should find not only the assurance that life has a purpose at the heart of it, but the conviction we need in order to govern and sanctify the human lot.

II

THE WITNESS OF SUFFERING

Eager and faint, empassionate and lonely,
These in their hour shall prophesy again;
This is His will Who hath endured, and only
Sendeth the promise where He sends the pain.

Ay, unto these distributeth the Giver
Sorrow and sanctity, and loves them well,
Grants them a power and passion to deliver
Hearts from the prison-house and souls from hell.

F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul.*

I

"HE was a rebel against pain," writes an eminent critic of the late Sir Leslie Stephen, "not on his own account, for he stood his trials well, . . . but in a Promethean, man-loving spirit. The sight of the world's tragedy made him an agnostic." [1]

Of how many persons has the same to be

[1] Dr. William Barry, "The Bookman," December, 1906.

said? Men whose faith in the Divine ordering of the world has been paralyzed by some fell stroke of death or of disease, whose life thereafter seems a grim silent protest against a blind or cynical force, men whose attitude towards religion is not so much one of doubt as of entire aloofness, resulting from the conviction that no theory can adequately account for the tragic anomalies of human life.

And what wonder that such should be their attitude when we consider how strong is love, how penetrative sympathy, and how profound the darkness that encircles us when our ignorance is unbroken by any clue to the mystery of suffering. To such persons it seems a violation of the very love they bear for wife or child or friend to rest satisfied with crude or traditional solutions often placed before them by the mistaken zeal of would-be comforters. How well the Man of Sorrows understood their case when He wept at the grave of His friend—wept at the impotence of aught but life to answer the challenge flung to life by the stormy heart of despair.

It is, as we have seen, the increasing sensitiveness to the harsh realities of life that creates life's problem both in the theoretic sense and

the practical, in the domain of philosophic inquiry and of social endeavour. To many that problem seems to demand, intellectually, a philosophy not yet arrived amongst us. Suppose, however, that the solution should be afforded by experience. Suppose our exceeding bitter cry should be answered by certain facts presented by life itself, and, therefore, while uncontrovertible, requiring in order to be understood only the open mind and the feeling heart. Suppose that life should answer our challenge at the very point where the feeling that gives rise to that challenge is most bitter, that as it is suffering which gives the edge to our despair, so it should be suffering which, in revealing the possibilities of the individual soul under its discipline, should open to our view a larger and enduring life.

2

Let us, for the moment, consider this as a supposition only. Would it not be in the broadest sense of the term reasonable that our real and proper life should declare itself in such a way? If this present life is but an episode in a larger and enduring life, what sort of evidence of the fact will be most conclusive? There are

two ways in which we can conceive of such knowledge coming to us: (1) by a pronouncement from the life beyond; (2) by an inference from the life present. Consider for a moment, the first of these. That "reappearances" from the life beyond are alleged to occur, and that in many cases the evidence for them seems to establish their genuineness, the reader does not need reminding. Attempts have been made in recent years to collect accounts of such phenomena, and to build up of them an inductive science. And there is no reason why, in process of time, some deeply interesting information may not result from such efforts. Greatly, however, as the inquirer would like to place confidence in such evidence, its weakness is manifold. In the first place, it is to a great extent second-hand. To those, therefore, who have not experienced for themselves any of these occurrences, it is no stronger than any evidence which rests upon testimony. We have here set out to ask whether life itself contains any guarantee that the struggle involved is worth its while, and if the guarantee is not such as may be perceived first-hand, and by all men everywhere, then, obviously, it is not the kind of evidence we are seeking. And further, if all

men could believe on the testimony of some that we do survive the change called death, what would this tell us of the *life* which thus survives? What inspiring or energizing force would it bring to bear on the life we are living now? It would merely add a "to-morrow" to to-day without any information that would make either the one or the other worth having. Does any one of us, for example, derive inspiration from *this* life's to-morrows? From the thought that to-morrow we shall be richer, or stronger, or happier, most persons certainly do derive an incentive for their work to-day, but that thought does not spring out of the morrow, it springs out of ourselves and our own potentialities in the present. In the same way, what we need for the illumination of the present life is a conviction of its superiority not over time only, but over the circumstances of time as well.

Is it not this that is felt by many persons who scout the conventional idea of immortality? Why, they say, should there be anything inspiring or consoling in the thought of an extension of life beyond death? And surely the objection is valid. So far from the mere thought of an endless life helping us to live the life that now is, there are circumstances under which

such a thought is intolerable. The "survival of personality"—to adopt the languid phrase of the time—may mean the survival of a hundred and one things which we prefer to think of as "buried with our bones." "Me," exclaims the disconsolate Tithonus, "cruel immortality consumes." How little then would the mere announcement of our survival avail us even if it were universally heard and in such a manner that none could doubt!

3

No mere pronouncement from the life beyond being conceivably adequate to establish the worth of life, we turn to the other kind of evidence: we ask whether any inference can be made from the life present. Here or nowhere, we shall feel, is the evidence to be found. Life itself must tell us, not in words nor in arguments, but by its own superiority to the facts of time.

The most sceptical reader will admit that, if the fact of suffering makes so deep an impression upon us, the conduct of the sufferer must have equal weight. The one is as undeniable as the other. We now leave the field of conjecture for that of concrete fact. Let us take as typical of the kind of "conduct" here referred

to an experience related by Mr. A. C. Benson in the "Thread of Gold."[1]

"A few weeks ago I was staying with a friend of mine, a clergyman, in the country. He told me one evening a very sad story about one of his parishioners. This was a man who had been a clerk in a London bank, whose eyesight had failed, and who had at last become totally blind. He was, at the time this calamity fell upon him, about forty years of age. The directors of the bank gave him a small pension and he had a very small income of his own. The man and his wife came into the parish and took a tiny cottage, where they lived simply and frugally. But within a year or two his hearing had also failed, and he had since become totally deaf. It is almost appalling to reflect upon the condition of helplessness to which this double calamity can reduce a man. His speech was, as is always the case, affected, but still intelligible. Only the simplest facts could be communicated to him, by means of a set of cards, with words in raised type, out of which a few sentences could be arranged. But he and his wife had invented a code of touch by means of which she was able to a certain extent,

[1] § XX, "A Sealed Spirit.

though of course very inadequately, to communicate with him. . . .

"On the following day the Vicar suggested that we should go and see him; we turned out of a lane and found a little cottage with a thatched roof, standing in a small orchard, bright with flowers. On the bench we saw the man sitting, entirely unconscious of our presence. . . . We walked down the path; when we were within a few feet of him he became aware of our presence, and turned his head with a quiet expectant air. His wife went up to him, took his hand, and seemed to beat on it softly with her fingers; he smiled, and raised his hat as if to greet us, and then took up a little writing pad that lay beside him. A little conversation followed, his wife reading out what he had written, and then interpreting our remarks to him. What struck me most was the absence of egotism in what he wrote. . . . We then asked him a few questions about himself. 'Very well and very happy,' he wrote, 'full of the love of God'; and then added: 'You will perhaps think I get tired of doing nothing, but the time is too short for all I want to do. . . . I am trying to write a little book. Of course I shall never see it, but I should like to tell

people that it is possible to live a life like mine, and to be full of happiness; that God sends me abundance of joy, so that I can say with truth that I am happier now than ever I was in the old days. Such peace and joy, and so many to love me; so little that I can do for others, except to speak of the marvellous goodness of God, and of the beautiful thoughts He gives me.'

"I shall never forget," concludes the author, "the sight of the two as we went away: he stood, smiling and waving his hand, under an apple tree in full bloom, with the sun shining on the flowers. It gives me the sense of pure and simple content such as I have rarely experienced. The beauty and strength of the picture have dwelt with me ever since, showing me that a soul can be thus shut up in what would seem to be so dark a prison . . . and yet not only not losing the joy of life, but seeming to taste it in fullest measure."

Whether Mr. Benson is giving us an actual experience or a very beautiful parable, we need not concern ourselves to inquire. Greater than the question "Is it true?" is the question "Has it truth?" And that the above narrative, be it only parable, has truth no one with any

experience will doubt for a moment. It forms a fit type for a host of experiences which we have met with and are constantly finding among ordinary men and women, instances, many of them, which carry more weight because the circumstances are far more pitiable. In the above picture the surroundings are those of peace; there is no pain, and the man is in the prime of health and vigour. But there is never absent from the writer's mind an instance where no such favourable conditions obtained; where there was not only the gradual limitation of a life extraordinarily full of intellectual interests, not only the baffling of hope from time to time, as first one and then another physician was consulted, but pain and utter prostration, together with some of the most revolting accompaniments of physical decay. And yet in all this one could spiritually see, as though it had been a visible thing, the growth of something radiant within that stricken life, as though the limitation and suffering were fuel which the spirit consumed, waxing stronger day by day until mortality was swallowed up of life.

Words cannot convey the impression produced on the mind of one forced to contemplate such a test and such a triumph. They can

hardly fail, however, to recall to the reader's mind some similar experience. The question is, do we grasp its significance? Does not the triumphant progress of the sufferer afford a strong presumption that the life so manifested exists on a plane along which death does not operate? Bear in mind that there is nothing in the physical preludes of death to produce such an attitude in the sufferer; nor is it only at the approach of death that it is manifested, but in the full vigour of life as well. Bear in mind also that it is not the way of pain to beget serenity. Physically speaking, pain should produce an intenser struggle, and then, if the struggle is unavailing, a mood of blank despair. Instead of this, the exact opposite holds of those spiritual natures which seem only to be set free by pain, to stand erect as it were, in strength, patience, serenity, and sweetness of disposition so foreign to this sphere of physical change that we can call them nothing but immortal. A scientific friend writes to the author: "I find a more genuine 'intimation of immortality' in this triumph of the human spirit over suffering than in all other arguments I have yet listened to. In fact it is the *only* one which appeals to me intellectually at all."

4

If our knowledge of a life beyond death rested on some testimony from the world beyond, should we not at once say: But where is the proof? Where is the test? How can we realize that the life of the spirit will survive the great change? So that the mere pronouncement, apart from experimental proof, would have little effect in dispelling our doubt and ignorance. But in this impressive drama of suffering we *have* the test together with the pronouncement. To use a common phrase, we "see the principle at work." Immortality, as well as being a future prospect, is a present action.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the idea of *duration* is the least important idea in a true conception of Immortality. The essential feature of that conception is not the prolonging of life, but the *kind* of *life* prolonged. In a word, it is a *quality* of life, in distinction from mere quantity. And so Immortality and the Life Spiritual are inseparable, being, indeed, merely two ways of speaking of the same thing.

It is a striking fact that in the Christian writings—which, take them how we will, all will admit to be the most complete exposition

of the Spiritual Life—Immortality is never treated as merely "a survival" or "a future state," but a quality of life resident in us now. If we will carefully consider every passage in the New Testament in which the term "Eternal Life" and its cognates occur, we shall find that in every case the reference is to a *quality of life* operative here and now; and however we may regard these Christian writings, we are bound at least to admit that they voice an experience or they could not have been written.

And if this is the case, and the life which we now live in "the flesh" is subject to other laws than those which govern the flesh, what evidence of it could be more convincing than the instinct to triumph which each individual possesses, and which is capable of being developed in direct proportion to the suffering or adversity which falls to the individual lot?

Once more—for we are following a double thread—what but suffering could reveal the existence of this instinct—suffering, which, by investing it with such tragic guise creates, so to speak, the dramatic prelude for such a revelation?

The *evidential* value of suffering lies in the fact that it presents a field in which no earthly

issue hangs upon the test. Apart from spiritual things there can be no motive for patience and calm in the presence of a fate which nothing can avert. The upward look, the kindly whisper, the smile, the silent night lighted with joy, nay, the serenity and even radiant attitude of the sufferer cannot bribe disease to stay its hand or death to delay its approach. The instinct to triumph has no motive apart from that inner life of which it is the breath and epiphany. In the reformation of character we may also see evidence of the quality of life of which we are speaking; a man, however, may have many obvious motives for submitting to the discipline of a better life. Suffering alone has no motive if we subtract that of the Life Spiritual. Just as the courage of the soldiers on board the sinking "Birkenhead," calmly awaiting the grip of inevitable death, affords us a finer example of valour than all the chronicles of armies, so the serenity of those who live only to suffer and to die witnesses to the quality of the Life within, and the fever of our revolt is calmed by that atmosphere of benediction. We are persuaded as we watch beside them that it is no ruthless crushing of life that we see, but the release of all that is noblest and permanent

from what is temporary and obstructive. We feel that it is our own blindness that is death; our own protest that is discord; and in that silent room, saddened with the sombre ritual of disease, we stand face to face with Immortality.

5

We shall not, of course, imagine that this "solves the problem," or divests life of its mystery. Several questions are sure to occur to the reader's mind, as, *e.g.*, Why are we so constituted that the knowledge of this our true nature and destiny can only be manifested through suffering? And why, not man only, but "the whole creation," should "groan and travail together in pain." These are, of course, legitimate questions. Moreover, the writer believes that we have, if not a categorical answer to them, at least so pregnant a hint of their solution as to allow the spiritual instinct to develop in intellectual peace.[1]

Need we, however, because we have not at once a complete account of all the issues involved, hesitate to commit ourselves to what is vouchsafed us by life itself through the lips of suffering? What is it we have been seeking?

[1] See Essay VI.

an *indication* that the suffering is worth while. What is it we have said men question to-day? Not so much a "system" or doctrine, as life itself. Can we deny that we have in the instinct to triumph a clue to a larger and sublimer destiny? and if we are satisfied that there is now the clue to such a life, are we not justified in going forward in the direction in which it seems to point? The fact now before us is that Suffering no longer stands alone, a defiant conqueror, an enemy of the race, compelling all, sooner or later, to bow beneath its yoke till they sink into the dust, but that *along with it* appears its Conqueror, radiant, serene, in whose strong hands the affliction of the moment becomes the servant of eternal issues.

6

On this, the educative value of suffering, we shall have occasion to dwell incidentally in the following essays. It should, however, be pointed out in passing that it is not only as evidence of the Life Spiritual that suffering is vindicated. It has also a disciplinary value without which it is impossible that the immortal life in its present human conditions could develop. Once those conditions are seen and grasped, on the testimony of the spiritual con-

sciousness, we shall see nothing in this but what is natural and reasonable. To attempt this now, however, would be to anticipate the very object at which these essays as a whole are aimed. Suffice it for the present that the reader will find in the intimate relation between these two aspects of suffering a strong confirmation of the clue which life affords him.

7

It is this qualitative character that distinguishes immortality from any pagan idea of re-incarnation or philosophic doctrine of survival. Of this, again, we shall have opportunity of judging as we proceed. So few, however, appear to be aware of this distinction, that, at the risk of reiteration, it is important to make the distinction quite clear. It is a common thing to hear it said: "Immortality! that is no new thing; it was in men's minds ages before Christ." That is not so. The Immortality which Christ proclaimed in His own Person and life had indeed been adumbrated in deeds of valour and lives of heroic self-sacrifice, but as a revelation of *life*, of the true and proper life of man, it was as new as it has ever since been unique. "I am come that they might have *life*," was the burden of all He taught and did

and suffered; and but for that "coming" it is impossible to conceive of our eyes being opened to the measureless possibilities of our Spiritual Life. When St. Paul exclaimed, in the simple rendering of Luther, "Christ is my *life*," he defined what immortality really is. The triumph lies in the instinct to triumph; the extension of life in the quality of the life.

8

The question which remains to be considered is this: In acknowledging the triumph of the Spiritual Life do we not implicitly accept the reality of those convictions in which that Life centres? When, for example, the "white" light of the sun is split up by the agency of the prism into its component rays, do we not reasonably believe in the existence in the sun of metals corresponding to those rays? We have no other evidence that the metals are there except that of the prism, and it is impossible for us to "verify" the fact otherwise than through that agency. Yet no one with a smattering of physics doubts the fact. And are we not on similar ground here? We find a spiritual life that triumphs over the most adverse conditions with the same ease and grace with which light dispels darkness. Through the prism of suffer-

ing the elements of this Life are analyzed; the consciousness of the sufferer is full of them, is ever giving expression to them in words and phrases which stand, though but poorly, for eternal things; is ever attributing his triumph to them. On what grounds then shall we accept the light, as we perforce must, and yet reject the results of the analysis? Surely a more reasonable demand was never made than that of the late Professor G. J. Romanes: "Pure agnostics ought to investigate the religious consciousness of Christians as a phenomenon which may possibly be what Christians themselves believe it to be, *i.e.*, of Divine origin." [1] When science disclaims all authority outside the physical sphere she is perfectly right so far as her own functions go, but it cannot be too often repeated that that disclaimer does not amount to a *denial* of another sphere. And when within the physical sphere we find a certain effect for which no physical antecedents can account, and are forced by the simple principle of causation to accept what that effect tells us of its origin and conditions, are we not on ground as reasonable as that of any scientific inference?

[1] "Thoughts on Religion," p. 115.

The quality of the Life Spiritual can only be interpreted in terms of its own consciousness. These, reduced to their simplest form, are God, and the endeavour after union with Him. And so essential are these elements to the Spiritual Life that we cannot even form any conception of it without them. Take, *e.g.*, the language in which countless generations of sufferers have expressed their confident triumph: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Take away the personal element in that utterance, supply its place by mere acquiescence; say, *e.g.*, that "the universal process will probably vindicate the decay of the individual," and what have we? a crude sentiment incapable of sustaining fortitude a single moment, a sentiment which, if it ever could be human, would only be so at the expense of everything else more truly human. But take the words as they stand, quick with the breath of agony and trust, and we have not only something very human, but something which lights up with an inward flash what this "human" really is. Not only have we the fierce pain, but the steadfast love; not only mortal anguish, but immortal joy; not only elemental fear, but childlike loyalty. It is the cry of the child, of the lover, of the mother.

It is our nature's cry, forcing the reticence of mortality, and establishing a relation between the spirit and its God.

In all such language we have the natural expression of our own indefinable feelings and instincts. We cannot treat such like that of measured and exact discourse, for the simple reason that it is not the voice of the mind, but, as it were, the reflection in the mind of the experience of the Spirit. Yet each of us possesses that Spirit, we warm to the expression, we feel the glow faint or fierce of kindred convictions in our own consciousness, and, like the heart-chords which respond to the vibration of music, communion is set up between spirit and spirit.

It will be our aim in the succeeding essays to consider what light the triumph of the Life Spiritual throws on the contents of the Spiritual Consciousness. This we shall do broadly and indirectly, not seeking to establish a theory, but to view the Life Spiritual under various aspects, and first by referring to what all will agree to be its supreme example.

9

Let it, however, be clearly understood that Spirituality is a *life* before it can be a state-

ment. Many persons think that they must have a "reasonable" faith before they commit themselves experimentally to a Spiritual Life. This is the explanation of much of that attitude vaguely called "Agnosticism" amongst us. If Spirituality were an intellectual product it certainly would be requisite, before committing ourselves to a single devout act, to see the whole scheme "in black and white." Spirituality, however, no more awaits the understanding than appetite awaits a knowledge of the chemistry of food. In fact, it *is* an appetite, a passion, because of the denial of which, "many are weak and sickly among us, and many faint."

No one, therefore, whatever his "difficulties," ought to hesitate to commit himself to the devout life. The spiritual instinct within us is clear and imperative, and it is strengthened from without by the undeniable triumph which we see around us over suffering, circumstance, and sin. We are not called upon to forgo our intellectual or "rational" part; all that is required is that we commit ourselves to the guidance of the spiritual instinct within us. And this is no more than life itself asks of us at the first.

10

It is the *joy* of this assurance that the world is wanting in a day of languid conviction and manifold distraction. Apart from this, men have no proper joy, and only succeed in a dull acquiescence in duty or what they term "fate," or else in sating themselves with pleasure till they suffer in their turn. Life was never intended to be lived as the vast mass of people are living it to-day. There is for man only one natural life, and that is the Spiritual. "Our life so long has crept on broken wing!" We forget or else fling away our birthright, and then find life a burden, and beget perverse philosophies, the ugly brood of sense and night. Out of the spiritual ineptitude too, flow all the "problems" that vex our social welfare. Every one of which problems is at bottom nothing else than this: Cease from self: love God: take up the power He has given you; live your true life. We need that divine surmise that dwells in the heart when the joy of conscious relationship with the Father lifts us out of ourselves. We need, as the old Roman civilization needed it, the Voice that rang triumphant over the apparent havoc of a life: "I have overcome the world!" For lack of such a spirit of triumph

no wonder the burden of Amiel is on our lips: "Que vivre est difficile, O mon cœur fatigué," as the cry two thousand years ago was: "Non delicata res est vivere."[1] Life in such a spirit is not long endurable. The exultation that accompanies perfect health has its equivalent in the moral life above all. Not happiness but joy, not pleasure but God, is our true human portion, and our portion for ever. "He hath placed Eternity within their hearts."

[1] Seneca.

III

THE SUPREME PARADOX

Jesus Christ, the author and object of the Christian faith, a Jew by race, was born in Palestine towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great. The home of His childhood was Nazareth, a town in the lower division of the province of Galilee. The family to which He belonged was of humble estate. In early youth He worked at a handicraft. On arriving at mature manhood He became a public teacher, rapidly gained fame, gathered about Him disciples, offended the ruling classes by free criticism of the prevailing religion, and ended a brief but extraordinary career by suffering crucifixion.—Prof. Bruce, *Encyclopaedia Biblica.*

I have overcome the world.—Jesus Christ.

I

PEOPLE often ask, "Where can we find a reliable summary of the life and work of Jesus Christ, written in the light of the latest results of 'criticism,' and written by a fairly impartial critic?" A few years ago such a question might have been difficult to answer. The late Professor Bruce, however, whose claims

both as a scholar and an impartial judge are undoubted, a short time before he died wrote an article for the "Encyclopaedia Biblica," in which he compressed the results of a life of study devoted to this one subject. The summary of that article stands at the head of this section.

What does it summarize? A brief life of poverty and spiritual isolation terminated by a death of disgrace.

The most orthodox reader of these pages, while he will deny that this represents anything like the whole truth about Jesus Christ, will at least admit that it is *true*. The most exacting of rationalists also will admit that in the light of the latest scholarship this at least is trustworthy. Taking this, therefore, as common ground, where all who are sincerely interested in Jesus Christ can meet, let us for the present glance at the life thus outlined with a view to discovering how it is that one, in all points so complete a failure, can have become such a radiant Symbol of Victory as the "Christ" speedily came to be for multitudes of men, as He has continued to be through the ages, and is to-day.

2

And let us be clear at the outset that the

outline of the life of Jesus Christ *is* the outline of a failure as unqualified as anything that modern "realism" could describe. Whatever be our ideal of success, whether grossly material, or whether approximating to a purely intellectual ideal, it must be confessed that a life of poverty, isolation, and disgrace is not the model on which such an ideal is formed. At its very vaguest and lowest, success signifies the bringing of what we attempt to a favourable or prosperous issue. The verb *to succeed* means etymologically to inherit a throne by following in due order of birth a deceased monarch; and it carries with it ideas proper to the throne, ideas of maturity—hence longevity; of power—hence of wealth; of social recognition and distinction, as well as the cruder ideas of physical strength and the pomp and circumstance of courts. Whatever type we take of the man whom in common parlance we account successful, be he soldier, merchant, priest, or scholar, his position in our minds will be found to be coloured more or less by this monarchical conception.

There is not a vestige of such colouring in our concepts of the life of Jesus. In the first place He was poor, and to be poor meant in His

day, scarcely less than it means in ours, to lack the one key to the treasure-house of life. But to any gifted individual poverty means much more than this. It continually presents a barrier in the pathway of his progress. Even in a day professedly democratic this is the case; in a country where "equality of opportunity" was undreamed of the limitations of poverty were yet more exacting. There is a tendency to-day to gloss the hard facts of this poverty and limitation. We have found an idyllic side to poverty —at any rate to the poverty we do not personally experience—in which we seek poetic relief from the contemplation of our swollen opulence. And, as a matter of fact, round the cottage in the vale there may cluster richer boons and tenderer graces than in the palaces of kings. The poverty of Jesus was not an idyll. Hard and stern as squalid Nazareth could make it, it represents what it was. And the disabilities it carried with it were equally rigorous. The province where these things befel was despised, and the village despised even more than the province. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" men said, and "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," and even when their despite was confronted by the person and teaching

of Jesus, they turned away with the contemptuous remark: "Why, it's the carpenter's son!" It was absurd to listen to one of such low extraction and mean surroundings.

3

His birth and poverty closed the schools against Him, and strengthened the hands of those who found His originality inconvenient. To this it may be objected that when He went abroad in fulfilment of His "call," He met with a large measure of popularity, and that occasionally influential and scholarly men sought His opinion. But what did this really amount to? Where were the influential, the scholars, the crowds, when He stood, pale and scourged, before Pilate's judgement seat? The crowds clamoured for His execution, and one only of His influential acquaintance was forthcoming to provide Him a tomb. Of all the multitudes who listened to His teaching only twelve men and a few women attached themselves to Him, of whom one betrayed Him to death and the rest forsook Him in His extremity. His "popularity" was fitful as marsh-fire, and to follow it would in all probability have drawn Him into a quagmire of insurrection which would not only have been fatal to His mission, but in which His very name

would have perished. Foreseeing this, He mistrusted popularity from the first, and refused to identify Himself with party-cries. So far, then, from those fickle multitudes constituting "success," they formed, as ignorant acclaim must always do, the gravest menace He had to encounter. But in being unable to avail Himself of even this devotion, almost the only gateways of the external world of men and women were closed against Him.

4

For the severest of all His limitations lay in the isolation of His life, both actual and spiritual. It is recorded that He was homeless, but the absence of a dwelling-place—sufficient privation in itself—was a symbol of an intellectual, moral, and spiritual homelessness such as in its last rigours passes our comprehension. No man has ever been so lonely as was Jesus. None has ever experienced so entire a disappointment of the social instinct. The successful man, however secluded his life, however incomprehensible his excellence may be to crowds or Courts, is certain to find intellectual affinities with a few, and, as a rule, the smaller the number the more intense is the pleasure derived from the intercourse. To the philosopher, the

artist, the man of letters, it is the winning of intellectual sympathy, the consciousness of the appreciation of his peers which gives success its sweet savour. In this respect Jesus stood absolutely alone. Not only had He no such fellowship, He was unsupported by the knowledge that any such existed. His was not the isolation of the *savant* who is cheered and stimulated in his vigils by the knowledge that other, if unknown, seekers are pursuing like researches. So far as we can gather Jesus, in this respect, had consciousness only of the great prophets of the past; but the stimulus of example—so to put it—is a very different thing from the stimulus of fellowship, of *camaraderie.* To be sure, it is not possible to suppose that in His large charity Jesus did not feel that the spiritual ideals with which He was identified had many witnesses. But this feeling is, again, a thing quite different from actual knowledge of the fact supposed. To actual isolation it can afford no relief, for it can supply no actual fellowship.

It is true that He had the attachment of His disciples, but these men were inaccessible to the ideas and motives which formed His constant theme. Indeed, from what we know of them,

previous to His death, we can only infer that, in this respect, they were an aggravation of His solitude. With infinite patience He strove to make them partakers of what was the inspiration of His own life, but to the close they misunderstood Him. Here, again, it is very difficult for us to realize to ourselves what this phase of isolation meant to Jesus. Most of us know what it is to have our actions misconstrued, and our motives misinterpreted. But with us the misunderstanding is personal, and the smart is personal. In the case of Jesus we have to add the ideal to the personal, or rather we have to set the ideal first. However deeply personal misunderstanding wounded Him, there is no trace of scar in the Man as we behold Him; it was when "the Kingdom" was misunderstood, when the spiritual was exploited in interests political or legal, when human life was cheapened, when the Magdalen's gift or the publican's hospitality was misconstrued, it was then that the wound was inflicted, that the isolation became anguish. This is something so altogether beyond the experience of ordinary life that many men and women must live and die without so much as a glimpse of the lonely regions Jesus trod. We are acquainted with

suffering for a principle or in a cause. We understand men when they say that they "have their cause at heart." The high political leader is touched to the quick by reflections cast on principles which it is the work of his life to expound. But "the Kingdom" and the spiritual life stood in a far closer relation to Jesus Christ than cause or principle stand to the politician or social reformer. Even those who "identify themselves with their movement" have not, and cannot have, respecting that movement a feeling of its *absolute* rightness or fitness. They are alive to the fact that in the clearest principle, in the completest dream, there is nothing really final, really ultimate. Consequently the free criticism of principle or Utopia cannot dismay them utterly, and even common abuse is tempered in its effect by the fact that what is abused is after all human. In Jesus, however, we find not only absolute identification with His ideal, but a conviction that the Life He came to manifest to men was as "final," as "divine" as God Himself. To understand in the least what His isolation was, we must pass from things intellectual to things of an altogether different order; we must imagine, say, an artist condemned to live and work in the

society of blind men; or recollect the experience of Beethoven and Wagner when, at first, they found the world deaf to their interpretations of tone and harmony. What soul-wearing hunger of baulked sympathy was theirs! What then must have been the spiritual loneliness of Him who would have opened men's eyes to the lilies of the field, and their ears to the rejoicing of angels; to whose rapt ear and quiet eye the inward beauty of "the Kingdom," and the harmony of the human and divine were so transcendently lovely that he exhausted all figures and exalted all human relationships in the attempt to reveal the sovereign possibilities of life.

He failed. Even when, towards the close, He elicited from His associates some general admission of the spiritual nature of His work, they almost immediately asked Him whether He were at once going to free Israel from the Roman yoke. Even when for three years He had taught them the universality of the Father's love they would have called down fire on those who did not agree with them. They would have followed Mahomet magnificently, Jesus they could not follow—then. They had all the narrow concrete intelligence that makes for suc-

cess; He had none of it. He was universal; they were sectarian. He was spiritual; they were political. His spirit was fresh and free as the stream that gladdens the hillside; they were uniform in their narrowness, and restricted in their resources.

5

The culmination of the tragedy was His death. On the disgraceful death of the cross with all the added circumstance of brutality we shall not dwell. It should, however, be clearly understood that it *was* a disgrace—an immeasurable disgrace. Too often we miss, amid the harrowing physical details of that death, the intrinsic shame of it. If we may trust the narrative in "Acts," the shame was keenly felt by His associates. St. Paul's letters to Corinth we can fully trust, and there the cross is referred to as a "scandal." It is this scandalous nature of the death which we must always bear in mind in estimating the impression Jesus made on the eye of beholders.

6

It was in view of that death, and just before the terror of the final loneliness wrung the sweat from Him "like great drops of blood," that Jesus said to those about Him: "Be of

good cheer, I have overcome the world." Judged by every known standard of overcoming, the words sound like the hollowest pretence or else the bitterest irony ever uttered by man. Have they any other meaning? Is there any sincere sense in which failure so complete can be regarded as triumph?

It may be objected that the claim to have overcome is made in words which are doubtfully ascribed to Him, but whatever may be the case with those particular words, they only sum up a more living and practical claim which is inseparable from the figure of Jesus Christ as it has come down to us. The outline of His life, in all its human essentials, is that of a failure as complete as can be conceived; and yet the historic figure we know and think of stands out in all human essentials as a conqueror. To write the life of Jesus Christ is, from the standpoint of ordinary canons, to describe a failure; to recall the image of Jesus Christ is to recall a triumph. His "claim" was His life. And re-examining that life in the light of *its own* standard, we shall see one who so truly overcame both in Himself and in His influence that nothing seems to yield such copious hint of the solution of life's mystery as does His "failure."

7

To find the living features of that claim, let us glance again at His life.

We have seen that He was poor, and that His poverty baulked His genius and baffled His purpose. Now, it is a matter of common observation that nothing tends so much to embitter a man, to tinge his judgement of others and of life with injustice, to paralyze his aims and put him out of humour with existence, as does poverty. We have heard people say: "I allowed my circumstances to give my judgement a twist." "I counted other lives amiss because they seemed unjustifiably easier than my own." Now, there is not only no evidence that this was the case with Jesus, but there is every sign that, as time went on, and poverty and all it entails beset Him increasingly with limitations, the sweeter became His character, and the more delicately true His judgement. One of the most remarkable things in the account we have of Jesus is the absence of what is known as "class-feeling," of the bitter prejudices that often express themselves in a man when poverty checks his advance, and when he sees it checking the advance of others. Where is the reformer in whose recorded utterances, in whose

prejudiced attitude or injudicious action we have not to make allowance for something like this? Rent asunder by parties as the social life of Palestine was in Christ's day, what could be more natural than that we should be called upon to make a similar allowance in estimating His work and teaching? In regard to His associates, it is so continually. In regard to Him, never. Properly considered, this is one of the most astounding features in those records. Indeed, it would scarcely be too bold a thing to say that in the study of Jesus, as nowhere else in all history, the student may neglect the element of contemporary strife and opinion. It is true that Jesus uttered some very hard sayings respecting wealth, but they were uttered without a single reference either to Himself or His own disabilities or the disabilities of His class. They were uttered in the tone of one superior alike to wealth and poverty, of one who looked upon material circumstance from some high vantage-ground, where its true proportions to the actual life of men were apparent. They were launched not so much against wealth as against the fallacy that life *consisted* in abundance of possession, against wealth as a complicating factor in a life only dependent for a

little while on material needs. And as to the triumph which the qualities of justice and of mercy obtained in that poverty-striken life, is there anything more beautiful than the intensification of Christ's compassion as His sorrows drew towards their culmination? To the close His heart responded to the least indication of distress, and in the darkness of the mortal hour He was able to forgive.

8

Again, we have considered the continuous disappointment of Jesus's life apart from the poverty that so largely occasioned it. There is not one of us who is not more or less acquainted with the souring and warping effect of repeated disappointment. The uses of adversity are sweet—when we have learnt to use them; but the process of acquiring them is bitter to the extreme, and in the majority of cases leaves indelible scars upon the soul. Now, the constant frustration of all He took in hand had no such effect on the mind and heart of Jesus. His character has been spoken of as approximating to the stoic type. Nothing could be further from accuracy. Stoicism is a noble attitude, and often the highest to which men and women seem able to attain under the pres-

sure of repeated failure. But the temper of Christ was entirely different from that of Epictetus or Seneca. No one with the merest pretence to discernment could confuse Him with Aurelius. Stoicism is the attitude of the man who knows he is beaten; the striking thing about Jesus is that there is never any indication that He was conscious of failure. His whole tone is open and positive; His heart never ceases to beat high; His soul retains its conquering light until the last. If at times He sighs or weeps, He yields to emotional virtue which in the stoic were a vice. If He prays that the cup of anguish may pass from Him, He gives an indication of the reality of His woe, where otherwise we could scarcely believe that defeat and suffering were in the case at all. Expressions which never broke the silence of a Socrates only reveal how much fiercer was the conflict of Jesus, how much more complete and sublime His victory.

9

Once more, we have reflected on the spiritual isolation of Jesus. We have seen that, tested by every ordinary social canon, His life was a failure. Yet what does this failure imply? In the first place, it implies complete

conquest over one of the most dangerous foes which menace healthy human life—solitude. The lonely man usually succumbs to this on the one side or the other; either he becomes self-centred, or else he descends to the level of his surroundings. The former is more commonly the case with those who, unendowed with any great gifts or faculties, merely ache for a sympathy and understanding which circumstances deny them. The temptation to such lives is to retire altogether within the inner chambers of the heart, to forget the needs of those about them, and having thus disturbed the balance of their own dual existence, as individual and as social unit, to allow the latter to atrophy, and the former to degenerate into an ignoble egoism. That this was not the effect which solitude produced in Jesus hardly needs pointing out. His interest in all that concerned His fellow men was too vital and vivid, and His ministry of healing and counsel too indefatigable to give room for such a thought. But in truth it was not on this side that the effect of isolation menaced him; it was wholly on the side of his gifts and genius.

It is a law of life that anyone who feels within him the stir and mystery of new aspira-

tion, whether in the direction of thought or art or leadership, immediately seeks response among his fellows. It is the first law of what we might call the dynamics of progress. If the response is not forthcoming, the probability is that he whose gifts imperatively seek it will find the brightness of his ideal diminish, the intensity of his ardour wane, and himself descend, if no further, to the common level of the "finite clod." In the life of Jesus Christ we see the very reverse of this melancholy process. Had we no other fact before us than Calvary, that would be sufficient to testify to the undiminished flame that lit the inner shrine. Men of perished ideals are not crucified. Even if it is alleged that, superficially speaking, he was executed as a political malignant, the fact is the more indicative of the growth of a spiritual ideal, since friends and foes alike could not rise above a political level, and consequently, if one or the other interpreted his ideals in political terms, those ideals, thus mistaken, must have been very high to arouse such bitter antagonism. As a matter of fact, however, the whole course of the spiritual life in Jesus is lifted out of the realm of conjecture. Nothing is plainer, nothing more consistent, in the fragments of history that

preserve His figure than the cloudless reality in which the "Father," the "Kingdom," the "Spirit," and His own sublime mission stood ever forth before Him. If, towards the close, He stooped to what has been regarded by some as a lower propaganda—as in His last entry into Jerusalem, attended by the circumstance of triumph and the political watchword "Messiah" —the reason lay, not in any declension of motive on His part, but entirely in the impossibility of His claims being understood in any other terms. That episode presents no contradiction whatever to His previous attitude. It is clear in a moment's reflection on the actual state of things. It was Jerusalem's eleventh hour. The whole Jewish race was then menaced with extinction by the conquerors of the world. And why? Precisely because the Jewish nation had mistaken its calling, and was opposing to Rome's advance the front of a great temporal power. The temporal power was in that day the dream of rabbis and populace. In such terms they interpreted all the heritage of spiritual promise received through a long line of prophets from Abraham's day. As a *spiritual* power it is not probable that Rome would have offered them opposition. Indeed, the Roman yoke had, up

to then, been in their case singularly mild and lenient. To the things which the genius of the Jewish people really stood for Rome was as indifferent as Pilate was to "truth." Now, if the Jews could at that eleventh hour have regained the spirituality that had made them a People, their name and nation had been preserved, together with their function in the evolution of spiritual life. Jesus saw this; the whole tenour of His teaching reveals that He saw it. He saw into the very core of the Jewish malady—materialism. To save them from the results of this by making them partakers of His own spiritual ideals was, at its lowest, a most humane and patriotic endeavour; it was a piece of foresight which gives Jesus the first place among spiritual statesmen. But to save alive the soul not merely of a people, but of the world, to keep entire the type of man's life with God, this was a spiritual task of the first magnitude, a task which at once measures, and is measured by, the spiritual genius of Christ. And it was in the execution of this task that Jesus arranged that entry into Jerusalem; it was in the interest of this sublime hope that He permitted the cry which alone could penetrate the callous heart of the Jew. It did not penetrate it, and His own death was

the result. More, indeed, He failed; but His failure stands not in a loss of spirituality, but in the superabundance and intensity of it.

10

The isolation of His spirit, then, did not result in a diminution of the ideal, any more than did disappointment sour, or poverty embitter Him. The bare outline of His life is harsh and forbidding; it is that of a failure; but upon near approach it is found to be lit by an inner light, and in the light of that personal life we see a form of wondrous beauty and commanding awe. In a word the *personality* of Jesus Christ is as sublime a triumph as His *life* is supreme among failures.

What is the secret of it? The secret will be found in that phase of His limitations which was most pronounced and most grievous; the isolation, mental and spiritual, to which His genius subjected Him. It is here that we cross the threshold of the outer and the inner life, and enter the sanctuary where the secret is guarded. As though social and spiritual loneliness were not enough, we find Him courting physical solitude, repairing to the hillside at such hours when the stars alone kept watch. He went thither, in the simple language of the narrative,

"to pray." Perhaps never entirely in our own minds is "prayer" divested of a certain mechanical guise, or at least of the effort of acquired habit. Perhaps on this account the very best description of those "prayers" beneath the Syrian stars is afforded by the confession: "I am not alone for the Father is with me." Into this sanctuary of the silent stars, the dim soil, the long ripple washing in the reeds, it is not possible for us to enter as He entered. Yet even though we find the place empty and voiceless, it must be acknowledged that *here* was the source and secret of all we have seen. The personality of Jesus is in itself incomplete without the addition of another personality—that of the Father. Agnostic we may be ourselves, but we must perforce acknowledge that *He* was no agnostic, and that the whole secret of His human triumph lay in that fact.

And if the source and secret of the most complete moral triumph the world has known lay in communion with God, must there not somewhere be a flaw in our agnosticism? Surely, if there is anywhere such a thing as a valid inference from experience it is that of Communion with God, as derived from the moral achievement of Christ! The conclusion which His

associates subsequently drew from all they had witnessed, that they had seen "the glory of God in the face of Jesus," was surely a rational process at least as sound as any reasoning from effect to cause. And were we at present following up the inference, were we inquiring into the nature of the Divine Being as manifested in the language and devotion of Jesus, the only question we should have to raise would be: Was Jesus possibly the victim of an illusion? Did the long nights passed in "prayer" among the hills represent deluded hours of introspection and objectless ecstasy? Did the even flow of His ministry, the wisdom of His decisions, His unfaltering love of His kind spring from a godless void of the imagination? Such a question could scarcely occupy us long. We should feel, if we adhered to the facts, that an affirmative answer to that question would be simply unthinkable. However foreign to our own experience the reality of God's presence and of Communion with Him may be to us, we are bound in truth to admit that the reality to Jesus was cloudless, unquestioned, instinctive.

II

Returning, however, to our main line of inquiry, let us be quite sure we understand

what it was that, in the human isolation of Jesus, led Him to say He was not alone. The nineteenth-century poet, in describing a somewhat similar experience in a man of solitude and high-minded pursuits, says

> In the mountains he did feel his faith,

and the line has been quoted again and again as applicable to Christ. In a sense it is, but in another and greater sense it only shows how far we are removed from realizing that sovereign faculty which Jesus exercised in the solitudes of His life. It was not the "feeling of His faith" that occupied Jesus in the stillness of the night, it was the Voice—the Heart—of the Father. Between the philosopher meditating his "system" in the tranquillity of the hills, and Jesus speaking voice to voice with the Father there is the difference of a whole world. It is the difference between complex manhood and simplicity, between the pondering intellect and the heart of a child. To us, indeed, the latter may seem unworthily simple; and the more abstract and complex processes of thought more compatible with our fancied dignity. In such wise the stars appear minute and feeble compared with our ponderous and manifold earth,

until with the aid of the telescope we find ourselves among them and learn our own essential littleness. It is only when we breathe the same atmosphere as Christ breathed that we find in prayer a universe of its own—a life of its own—that we find how vast is the difference between the simplest spiritual life and the highest altitudes of "the discerning intellect." The child who has gazed on the stars through the telescope knows more about them than the unaided watcher on the highest Alps, for the child has been, so to speak, among them, while the other has never left the earth. The difference between the inner life of Jesus and that with which we are ordinarily content is not less, nor is the spiritual world in which he moved, with its atmosphere of prayer, its universality of outlook, less a reality than the populous systems of space.

It was thus the meeting of spirit with spirit that explains the undiminished ardour of Jesus amid his human isolation, and provides us with the key to his triumphant humanity. His secret lay in the essential superiority of the spirit over the circumstances of an earthly life—essential, because at one with the Eternal Love. And it is this which links with the complete triumph of Jesus Christ all those partial victories of

which we find so many instances in ordinary men and women around us. In all these examples—and the pages of history, secular and ecclesiastical, furnish us with a multitude of such—the same quality is discernible. Through much that is chequered, dissimilar, even base and sordid, there is a perceptible golden thread which seems to occupy, to the central and sublime triumph of Jesus, the same relation that the spinal cord and nerve fibres do to the brain. The illustration may be a very inapt one, but it is at least pertinent in this: that while the nervous vitality, the conscious life of the body, runs through the body and is manifested more or less efficiently in every member, it is in itself the expression of some other and mysterious plane of being. In precisely the same way we find in widest diffusion this Instinct to Triumph, these glimpses and hints of a life incomparably larger and fuller than anything which we find complete here, and if there is anything like a philosophy of experience at all, our only conclusion must lie in the direction of a spiritual life which suffering only intensifies and death cannot subdue.

12

We have said that what men and women are seeking to-day is not an elaborate solution

of life's problems, not a mathematical demonstration that such and such beliefs are true, but some indication *discoverable in life itself* that the struggle it involves is worth while. And just as every movement of the living flesh is an indication of the conscious life of the body, so the Instinct to Triumph is an indication of the Spiritual Life, which, in its growth and progress makes all that happens in this earth-life infinitely worth while. Just as consciousness is an inference, an inevitable inference, from physical response, so spirituality is an inference no less inevitable from such a life as we have been examining, and from other lives in which similar phenomena are apparent. And so immortality, in the sense of an indestructible quality of life, is not a conception brought *to* the life present, but one brought *out* of the life present, just as consciousness is brought out of volition and action.

Here, again, it must be obvious that, admitting the truth of this, the fact of suffering wears a very different complexion. One would not say that the problem of life is solved, for the notion of "solving," besides being in itself crude, makes at once too much and too little of life; too much, because it suggests that unless we can clear away the last vestige of mystery respecting our

present environment, we cannot commit ourselves freely and trustfully to the high destiny of which we have so clear a glimpse; and too little, for the very idea of solution implies completeness in the thing to be solved, implies a certain adjustment of relations of the parts which, when effected, will present a rounded and comprehensible harmony; whereas it is not within the power of our thought to conceive such finiteness either in respect of life or of any part of it. Granted, however, that a complete solution of the problem of existence is neither possible nor desirable, it will be admitted that certain aspects of life, such as pain, sorrow, and evil, are justified when they appear as the only thinkable means to an end which would otherwise remain in obscurity to the detriment of our true progress. To return to the example before us, we could not perceive the triumph of Jesus Christ without the poverty and isolation which attended His life and the disgrace in which it culminated. A triumph is a manifestation of tested strength. The test implies *con*test, and that implies, if not an active foe, at least the *vis inertiae* of adversity. It is not a case of adversity being a *better* medium than any other for the manifestation of strength; it is the only conceivable medium.

The significance of Jesus lies in His having plumbed the utmost depths of humiliation and suffering, and yet achieving complete spiritual victory. Only thus we are able to say with Renan: "Thanks to Jesus, the dullest existence, the most absorbed by sad and humiliating duties, has had its glimpse of Heaven."

IV

THE TRANSFORMING LIFE

Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.—JOHN STUART MILL, *Essays on Theism.*

I

IN the mind of the sculptor there rises an idea, some vision of loveliness or strength, the daughters of Nereus, or Hercules with the Cretan Bull. This vision exists in his mind in a higher degree of perfection than any to which it can attain in its realization; but because he is an artist, the vision is not enough. He is under the law of the life of God: he must create. He loves and therefore he must give. Further, because his art is the sculptor's, the only medium through which he can render his vision is that of inert substance! Hence a union takes place which, left to our bare imagination, would have seemed inconceivable, the union of movement

and grace with that which is dead, cold, and immobile; the union of feeling with the insensible; of life with that which least resembles life.

Were it not for the genius of the sculptor we should have said that no two things were more incompatible than the vision in his brain and the block of stone awaiting his chisel.

We are sometimes told that spirituality is incompatible with practical life. There could be no greater mistake. The more really spiritual a man is, the more intensely practical will his spirituality be. The only sculptor indifferent to his art is the indifferent sculptor. If he live in a world of beauty and imagination, his marbles will be beautiful and imaginative, and if he cannot find marble, then, rather than suspend his art, he will exercise his prowess on inferior material.

Certainly there is such a thing as visionariness; but visionariness is not a spiritual quality at all. The visionary is content with his imaginings, he never presses conclusions to an issue, the atmosphere of speculation is enough for him. He may even get as far as writing second-rate fiction or controversial theology; but measured by the standard of giving a cup of cold water to

the little ones, there is nothing spiritual about him. A great deal of "visionariness" passes itself off among us to-day as spirituality, and we have so far lost a simple apprehension of what is spiritual that we unconsciously allow the counterfeit to usurp its place. But while we have in a great measure come near losing our spiritual sense, we have not lost common sense; and the sovereign tests to apply to the dubiously spiritual are, always and among all men: How does it work? and, how does it suffer?

Because work and suffering are, in the world which we are at present concerned with, the materials in which the eternal joy of the spiritual vision is to be expressed, the things we find to do and the things we have to bear are our stone or clay, and our task is to fashion these so that they may give assurance of the vision at whose behest we work, in the enjoyment of which we endure.

2

There is an aspect then, in which, the more purely spiritual our standpoint, the more emphatic the material and practical will become. The whole attitude and habit of Christ afford us an example of this. One thing cannot fail to strike us as we read the narra-

tives of His life, and that is the importance which He made of material conditions and needs. He recognized, *e.g.*, the multitude's need of food and shelter. His gift of healing was never relinquished. The death of a child or a young man seemed to Him a disorderly and even monstrous thing.[1] Indeed, His realization of the life that now is, with all its needs, foes, abuses, and possibilities, was so peculiarly vivid and clear, that those who to-day contend for social and economic justice, claim to find in Him a patron.

This is, on the face of it, a very extraordinary thing; that the admittedly most spiritual Teacher mankind has known should have concerned Himself so closely and in such detail with the

[1] "Christ discerned a most intimate alliance between physical and spiritual agencies, in virtue of which the physical were often spiritual, and the spiritual often physical. He claimed the power to make the most ordinary constituents of the human body channels of spiritual life, and the most marvellous spiritual teachings equivalents for ordinary rest and nutrition" (R. H. Hutton, "Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought," p. 234). The present work does not touch on Christian Mysticism proper, but it is suggested, in passing, that in the above fact, as viewed in Christ's ministry, may be found the key not only to the "miraculous" element in His life, but to the whole presentment of the Incarnation.

material conditions of life. And yet it is one and the same Person to whom these interests, often so widely sundered, are attributed. In the Fourth Gospel we find the same solicitude for material well-being that strikes us in the other gospels, while in the other gospels we have, in every deed of healing, in every social maxim, the seer, the spiritual enthusiast. The paradoxical portrait is one: but the paradox disappears in the personality of Christ. Only so purely spiritual a nature as Christ could be so practical. His very conviction of the spiritual origin and nature of man heightened in His estimation the importance of material conditions. It was because the material is the only medium by which (conditioned as we now are) we can *express* the vision, that material order and beauty were so much to Christ. It was because of this that, vivid as was His consciousness of the life unending, untimely death seemed to Him the outrage of a heavenly order. A less spiritual nature would have left men alone in their infirmities, satisfied that "the world is but a passing show." To Christ it was clear that even a spiritual result gained at the expense of unnecessary physical derangement was a violation of the unity of the world. A less spiritual

nature would have acquiesced in unlovely conditions of life and labour as affording scope for endurance. To Christ it was profanation that one aspect of our nature should be dislocated in order that another might be realized. To Him the cry of the slave was the more piercing because of the quality of the life that quivered under the lash; the waste of life was the more tragic because of the possibilities trampled in the mire of useless and unlovely toil. And besides all this, we have to recognize that a very considerable part of the adversity which is the lot of man is also the fault of man; and that the "ills which flesh is heir to" are sufficient, without "man's inhumanity to man," to develop the spiritual quality of life. To sin, as a violation of the Divine order, the spiritual purity of Christ rendered him peculiarly sensitive; and it became a conspicuous part of His mission to cancel, as far as was possible, the effects of this monstrous anarchy; to say, "Go, sin no more, lest a worse evil come upon thee." His was, in a very profound sense, an errand of remission. He aimed at a restoration of Order; and He did so because Order is the joy, the creation, the quest, of the Spirit of the Father.

In three short years the spiritual genius of

Christ left us sufficient to be unerringly sure that the spiritual never flourishes at the expense, or in disregard, of the material. And we shall presently see that the complementary proposition is true, and that the material needs and conditions of the race never can receive right recognition except when that recognition is informed and guided by the spiritual instinct.

3

For the present, however, we confine ourselves to the more personal aspect of spiritual vision. That inmost heaven of communion with the Father was the very spring and source of all that Christ achieved. To some this will seem a platitude, yet if one may judge from one's own experience of men and women in their thoughts about Christ, this is the very thing they most readily forget. Indeed, it often seems as though some strange perversity of our nature prevented us, even when most we admire the character of Jesus, from appropriating His secret. To how many who worship Christ is the *inner* Christ present? and yet was not His own highest conception of His office that of an approach to the Father? Did He not exist, so to speak, for the sake of His secret? And when

He is held up to our admiration from the pulpit or platform as the teacher or reformer, the champion of righteousness, the martyr for truth, how little we hear, as a rule, of the inner life, the vision, that gave us the epic of the world! The secular Jesus is made the hero of a novel, the subject of an idyll, and we see, or suppose we see, the human figure that wrought at Nazareth, or moved by the waters of Galilee. But all is superficial, evanescent. There is some faint impress of feature, some echo of voice, the hands move, the eyes are uplifted; of the soul, the *human* soul, we catch no glimpse. It is a singular thing to reflect upon, and it calls for reflection, that the rationalistic Jesus is as far from representing the original as the mechanical conceptions of Christ put forward in the least spiritual moods of the Church. The secular Jesus is no doubt the fruit of sincere feeling, and, whatever may be urged against it, its existence corroborates the spiritual interpretation of life. It is a confession that, even when men deem they must dispense with all that made Christ what He is, they cannot dispense with Christ. Prayer, faith, hope, may be eclipsed, but Christ cannot be eclipsed. If it is but the shadow of Christ, but an accent, a glance, a

blurred outline, a bundle of incongruities, He cannot be effaced from our modern life. Admitting this, however, the secular Jesus is but a shadow of the original; it does not help us: it is soulless. Those who so present Jesus to us either deny or doubt the Life Spiritual, or else relegate it to some department of aesthetics, and so all they have to offer us is a wayside calvary, where the weather-stained features stare upon us hollow-eyed, and the lips move in prayer no more. Thus the cycle of human perversity is completed, and in the *idolon* of Christ superstition and rationalism meet.

Apart from communion with God, Christ is inconceivable. He was, speaking humanly, the product of a race whose very genius was spirituality. "If it had not been for the Jews," says G. J. Romanes, "the human race would not have had any religion worth our serious attention as such."[1] For the sceptical mind there could hardly be a better preparation for the study of Christ's life than a perusal of those chapters in Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma," in which he expounds, from his de-

[1] Cp. St. Athanasius: "The law and the prophets were a sacred school of the knowledge of God, and of Spiritual Life for the whole world" ("De Inc.," 12).

tached standpoint, the spiritual genius of the Hebrews. If there is any passage in their writings more significant of this than another it is the words: "With Thee is the fountain of life"; and words could hardly be framed that lead us so immediately into the inner chambers of the life of Christ. The simple image of a spring and of the waters flowing from it is as complete and conclusive as an image can be of the dependence of man's spiritual life upon God. There is no break in the continuity; the channel alone marks the individual difference between the stream and its source. It was exactly thus that Christ conceived His life; it was exactly thus that He lived it.

4

It cannot be too clearly understood—especially in a day of rather wearisome insistence on "efficiency"—that the bulk of Christ's teaching deals directly or indirectly with prayer—*i.e.*, with communion with the Unseen; and that His words, His deeds, His whole habit of life are unintelligible and incomprehensible without it. It takes a place in His life quite unlike the place it occupies in the lives of men and women of spiritual genius; and that not because His life

was recorded by devout men who had an eye first to the things of the soul, but because it seems to have been impossible to record anything about Jesus without investing it with an atmosphere of devotion. Let us clearly recognize this, and then, if we are in quest of "efficiency," can we find any example of it comparable with what we find within the brief pages of the gospels? Can we anywhere point to benevolent activity on so extraordinary a scale as that afforded by the *general impression* of the work of Jesus? To the thoughtful reader of the gospels the marvel ever is, how three brief years could contain a hundredth part of the activity which they, broken and fragmentary as they necessarily are, suggest. Indeed, the devout if naïve supposition at the close of the Fourth Gospel is one which must find an echo in every reader. There is no divorce here between the spiritual and the practical. He who stands forth as unrivalled in spiritual genius, remains without equal in practical achievement.

No portrait of Jesus is complete, or even, in the pure and honest sense of the term, scientifically accurate, that does not catch the glow and fervour of those nights spent in the silence of the Galilean hills, where the sorely tried

spirit found rest and renewal in converse with the Father. But how is this to be imparted? There is sufficient in the narratives to suggest that converse; but it can only be fully known, and consequently Jesus Christ even as an historic figure can only be really apprehended, by the soul which has made that converse a reality of its own life. In other words, the only medium which affords a "realistic" conception of Christ, lies in experience of the Spiritual Life. This is as Christ would have it. He existed for the sake of His secret.

5

It is here that the analogy of Art fails us, because akin as the artist is to the spiritual genius in expressing his vision in the material at his disposal, there is a fundamental difference between them. While the artist can enable all to share his vision, he can enable no one to share his secret. We pause before the Sistine Madonna, we listen to the organ-roll of *Abt Vogler*, and so doing we enter a little way into the gorgeous chambers of the artist's mind. But we cannot go and do likewise; nor can we conjure up any comparable vision that shall nerve our fingers or break the silence of our lips. We recognize the beauty and the glory.

That is much, but that is all. Spiritual genius, on the other hand, not only achieves this but can also arouse and enkindle the vision that slumbers in the beholder. Art is the treasure of the few; spirituality is the possession of all. "Look not here nor there," said Jesus, to find the Vision, "for the Kingdom of God is within you." The most magnificent of all presentations, the epic of the Cross, not only was lived, but is capable of appropriation by the individual life in all its sublimity. Here is the difference between the passion of the artist for his vision, and the intense passion of Christ for His secret. The former effects an external order and beauty; the latter an internal order and beauty. The former realizes his own vision: the latter enables all men to realize the vision that is theirs. Life and immortality are brought to light. And what is true of Christ is true, within its own degree, of every spiritual life.

6

There is a very beautiful picture, frequently reproduced, in which the painter has represented a spiral down which maidens are descending from unseen heights to the lowly dwelling rooms of a house. An opening in the tiles above, where doves are brooding, reveals a

placid heaven. The descending maidens bear trumpets and lutes significant of the harmony that prevails in that upper air. Their faces are steadfast as with some vision. The heads of those nearest the floor of the dwelling are crowned with modest leaves.

It is an apt parable of the realization of the Spiritual Life in the common life: the vision that is at once sight and sound, beauty and order. We shall notice that all are descending. None climbs to grasp, all descend to give. And it is the *lowest* who achieve the laureate crown. Let us notice, too, that the workshop is close at hand. Hearth and board, bench and forge, the individual, the family, the state, are alike the recipients of the vision.

Conceiving the Spiritual Life as we have done, to be of a "higher" and more enduring quality than anything else of which we have experience, there can surely be nothing "strained" in the imagination of such a *descent* from the upper air of vision and harmony; in the conception of a quality of life as *descending into* lives otherwise dull and unmelodious? Intellectual precision has obtained such a tyranny over us to-day that we often hesitate to take on our lips the only words that can express spiritual

realities — expressions such as "descent," "higher," "incarnation," and so forth. And yet once it is clear that they are not figurative but strictly *literal* expressions, that there really is no way of handling certain phenomena of life, as well authenticated as any other phenomena, except by such language, the most sensitive intellect would not recoil. And once the matter is viewed with the living eye, as in the picture of the artist, or the conduct of the soul under suffering, surely there is nothing repugnant to philosophic unity in the thought of the Word being made flesh?

7

It is a very old problem, this of the discrepancy between language and the spiritual realities we seek to express by language. Language belongs essentially to the life of sense. It had its origin in the life of sense. It has a life and growth of its own, but they are of a lower kind; it is flexible, symbolic, imaginative, yet the barriers of time and space soon check its flight and draw it down to earth. "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness."

And yet it is the only medium we have, and the soul is always conscious of more than the words express. And, provided this conscious-

ness is present, the language, inadequate as it is, may serve, "thrown out," as Matthew Arnold expressed it, "at a mark." It is only when this consciousness is absent, when the words are taken purely in their sense-meaning, that they become foolishness to the intellect. And so if the *language* of devotion jars upon us, must it not be because we have ceased to use it devoutly? For example, in the picture of the Golden Stairs we are not sensible of anything that is repugnant to our conception of the Spiritual Life. In the descending maidens we recognize "influences" of which we are gratefully conscious as having entered into our own life. We even speak of them as "higher" influences. Yet what is this but the Christian's conception of Christ and of His Spirit? That conception is the result of experience; the whole language of St. John or St. Paul is just an outburst of experience. To enter into it we must first find our own experience, and, having found it, then, instead of jarring upon us, the language of the Church's devotion will not only seem natural, but indeed the only language that can express the disciple's loyalty and love.

Like every other form of life, the Spiritual Life seeks and demands expression, primarily in

the world of deeds by illuminating and transforming the manifold activities of life, but also in words. The disciple will follow his Master, but he will also wear upon his lips the name that is dearer to him than every other name. The whisper, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," what is it but a "creed," an expression of the deathless loyalty within? All such statements, however, because they *are* statements, touch and mingle with the restless, ever shifting element of intellect. Therefore, if these statements are to be viewed aright, it must not be with the intellectual eye only, but with the spiritual vision as well. Much of the strong disfavour into which creeds have come in the present day is owing to the fact that they are regarded as so many "cut and dry" propositions, whose very roundedness and mechanical form conflict with the infinite and organic nature which our instinct assigns to spiritual truth. So regarded they must appear not only inadequate, but largely incongruous. Hence they serve only to call up objections to the mind, and plunge us into the restless sea of intellectual conflict. Yet they were never meant to be so regarded. Their original name means a "symbol." It is we who have lost the spiritual

sense that rendered the symbol vital. The fault is ours. We are "straitened in ourselves." When related to life, and particularly to history as a corporate spiritual experience, creed and dogma glow afresh, and are not less the devout approximations to spiritual realities than is the language of psalmist and prophet and modern poet.

Of this there are abundant analogies in almost every field of life. The law of the inverse squares, for example, is not in itself a particularly exhilarating subject of study, but when we come to it with a mind full of the immensity and order of space, it is strange if we do not experience an intellectual thrill in the contemplation of even mechanical truth. Similarly, in the practical field, the simple duties done for us by domestics are, in themselves, very unemotional matters, but when we recollect the considerateness, care, and other qualities of which these tasks are the expression, we find ourselves warming to commendation. So that everywhere we find the same thing obtaining, viz., the necessity of coupling together expression and thought, expression and action, expression and *soul*. Expression only,

> Viewed in disconnection dull and spiritless,

is in all departments a dreary atheism; but in the spiritual sphere it is a kind of suicide, a confining of ourselves to the earthy impress of celestial things, a grovelling like Caliban over the footprint of an angel, a closing our eyes in the presence of the perfection of beauty.

8

To return, however, to our picture. What is there figured is a descent from a region of vision and melody to the chambers of everyday life. It is this descent that is the "note" of spirituality. It does not hold, or it does not necessarily hold, of the intellectual pleasures and refinements of life. The latter usually present an escape from commonplace circumstances rather than a channel through which transformation is effected. In saying this there is no depreciation of art, or music, or literature. Not only have the arts their accredited place in life, but their affinity with the spiritual instinct is remarkably strong. And yet, as we ordinarily use them, they do not exist as a pathway for descending grace and joy, but as an escape from the harsh realities of life. Up them we mount feebly and a little way, and then, at the appointed hour, return reluctantly to the ungentle dwelling, the unhallowed task. The picture

galleries in our large towns may afford some an interlude amid the enthralling cares of toil and business, but they do not as a rule bring to the toil and business any transforming energy. At best they nourish a "divine discontent" that sets us longing for saner, less sordid and exacting, conditions. So it is with music, with poetry, with the stage, with the modern enjoyment of Nature. These things may all have a refining influence, though it works very slowly; but if we remove the Spiritual, we must confess that these aesthetic qualities do little for the ordering and illuminating of the common lot.

And undoubtedly the same must be said for much of our religion, inasmuch as a considerable part of it does not rise above the level of aesthetics. There are, in every congregation, a number of persons who are there, at best, to escape the stress of secular things, to gain a little respite from the unkindliness of life, who never dream that the worship in which they participate is intended as well to be symbolic of a sacred order and beauty in all the details of human intercourse. Certainly it is an excellent thing for poor children of toil that there should be everywhere open havens of rest from an unquiet world. This, too, is a function of

that spiritual instinct which seeks often unknowingly its Home in God, and has given to religion this homely aspect. But it is not the highest function of Spirituality, nor is it the direction in which, as pointed out by Christ, Spirituality will transform the world.

The true spiritual note is struck when into some little task, some common relationship, we bring grace and joy and the love of God; when in our ordinary dealings we manage to express the temper which belongs to the larger consciousness of the soul, the temper of trust and charity, of righteousness, considerateness, and peace; when we work "ever as in the great Taskmaster's eye," offering Him our work as we offer our prayer; when a heart full of love of the Father begets a passion to see all things actually become what He would have them be.

9

All about us are the common things of daily life, the material out of which we as sculptors have to realize our vision. Days and moments, business, pastime, parents, children, friends. And the vision of these as they might be, as the Father would have them be, ought to kindle all the powers of will and faith into a creative act.

1

Take the immediate surroundings of home. Where even one member of the family is thus inspired, the grip of poverty is less, the sting of failure is disarmed, the burden of suffering is lightened. The rest of the family, however bitter and petulant life inclines them to be, turn instinctively to the loving one, as plants turn to the light. An element of harmony is introduced. And in proportion as the others yield to the dawning of the same instinct within them, they are lifted above poverty and suffering. They have their commonwealth in Heaven. They have realized the great secret that Heaven and blessedness lie within them.

This is no rose-hued theory. It is a fact authenticated in every street and every slum. It is destined to spread from family to family, class to class, community to community, breaking up false distinctions and classifications, and bringing in the true and only socialism, the socialism whose liberty stands in law, whose permanence is established in love.

Similarly, as regards work—which, together with home, covers the whole field of our external life. It certainly is true, as William Morris so strenuously maintained, that our work, to be a worthy expression of ourselves, must be such as

can be done with healthy pleasure and healthy intelligence. But until all classes, that is to say all individuals, realize this, a good deal of the work we find to do must necessarily fall below that standard. In the meantime are we to face our toil in the spirit of rebellion? Because the shop assistant is conscious of impulses and faculties which he cannot express at the counter is he to regard himself as a mere cog in the machine of commerce, as a drudge whom sheer necessity of earning a livelihood keeps at the task? Surely, though much of our work be unlovely and quite inadequate for the expression of our powers, it may at least be done faithfully as to God! and while it is regrettable, from the standpoint of ideal human relations, that such a vast proportion of toil is of this kind, so far from its resulting in a waste of life, those employed will find in it the only conceivable discipline for a larger life, and a life that is everlasting.

It is good that an increase in the value of the individual should have placed a high value upon environment, but it will be nothing short of a calamity if this recognition of environment stifle the true genius of the individual. We do not want to turn life into a great postponement. We

shall do so if we put the environment before the individual, and come to regard economic ideals as though they were the womb of progress. Economic ideals have their function, but to tell men and women that before they can realize their spiritual life their present environment must be altered is cant, and the blackest hollowness of cant. Because, forsooth, the dreams of reformers are not yet realized on the grand scale, we are to be restless and careless of our life! Because our toil is drudgery and our surroundings are unlovely we are to add thereto all the inward circumstance of despair or rebellion! And yet this is practically the language of those who fling to the winds the idea of a spiritual life, who tell us that unless we can realize our Heaven here we shall never realize it at all, who play upon that perverse tendency in our nature rather to sit down in degradation than to do each one what little he can for the lightening and ennobling of life. And these prophets of secularism are the very men who have arraigned religion for placing Heaven in a future world! Letting alone the fact that religion has always offered a *present* joy, and always appealed against *present* tyranny and greed, no more distant "Heaven" could outrage hope than that to

which non-spiritual socialism points in the vague aeons of municipal development.

Can regulations that are merely external make the smallest perceptible difference in the emotions and affections of men? The wind may blow hard against the iceberg, but if the ocean currents are moving in a contrary direction, not all the winds that blow can change its course, for the simple reason that by far the larger part of the iceberg is *submerged.*

By far the larger part of our nature, of our life, is submerged beyond all reach of political or social measures. And it is according to the movements of that hidden life that what little is visible shapes its course.

10

Our destiny, then, is potential within ourselves. Every man, woman, and child possesses this potentiality, this shaping spirit of prayer and the love of God. The golden stairs are in every home, in every house of business and workshop, whereby, in deep communings like those of Jesus on the Galilean hills, we may bring down troops of joys and graces to fill the common day with song. It is our fault altogether if the lower chambers of life are dull and spiritless. The task is difficult, no doubt;

difficult for husband or wife, youth or maiden, whose minstrelsy seems to meet with only thankless tolerance. So much the more need for that steadfast communion with the Indwelling Love which gives the soul a power and persistence not long to be denied. Resolute always to see what good there is, and to throw the whole weight of our love on to the side of that good, we shall find our love consuming the evil and liberating kindred souls to co-operate with us.

V

THE SPIRITUAL IDIOM

Even the simplest act of will in regard to religion—that of prayer—has not been performed by me for at least a quarter of a century, simply because it has seemed so impossible to pray, as it were, hypothetically, that much as I have always desired to be able to pray, I cannot will the attempt.—G. J. ROMANES, *Thoughts on Religion.*

I

IT would undoubtedly be a great relief to many if the kind of hesitancy to which the late Professor Romanes alluded in the sentence at the head of this section could be removed. Men are by no means averse to praying. The man who never even thinks of bending the knee is always unconsciously praying; for he hopes, trusts, looks forward, desires, regrets, repents, resolves; only without these emotions being disciplined or directed to any conscious object. What the secular Jesus is in the world this is in the heart of man. It is the spiritual instinct motioning in strange dumb way within

us, earnestly longing for articulation. Nothing intellectual can satisfy this secular prayer, nor are we able to forgo it. And yet we await the final word of philosophy before committing ourselves to this instinct! The child must grow up before it can address its Father!

2

No sooner are we prepared to commit ourselves to the spiritual instinct than the intellectual idiom gets in the way. It is much the same with what happens when we learn a language—say an Oriental language. The elementary stages are mechanical, but when it comes to expressing ourselves we are met by the difficulty that those who use this tongue, and with whom we would converse, do not *think* in the same way as we do. We have to exchange our native idiom for another; in other words, we ourselves have to undergo a change. To master the language, we must first let its genius master us. There is a passive side to the Life Spiritual, as well as an active. We must allow the idiom of the spiritual country to seize upon us.

But this is not accomplished at once. At first the intellectual idiom persistently gets in our way. In connection, *e.g.*, with prayer, we no sooner set about to pray—urged by the instinct

within us—than the thought arises: "How can prayer be answered consistently with the uniformity of nature?" or, "What becomes of our activity if we resign ourselves to God's will?" These are thoughts which we cannot take with us into the spiritual act of prayer. A simpler or stronger faith regards them as temptations, and dismisses them as such. And so they are—an intrusion of the lower into the higher—yet, as the quotation which heads this section shows, they are, with minds of a different order, the cause of much hesitancy and spiritual loss.

3

The relation between spirituality and the intellect resembles that between nature and the physical sciences. There is a sense in which, outside the physical sciences we cannot "know" nature, and, again, there is a sense in which we both can and do. There is, further, a sense in which our knowledge of nature depends upon scientific terminology; and, again, there is a sense in which that terminology is very largely inadequate. So, in regard to spirituality, "men must use their minds upon it, as upon all other experience; they must name, classify, and arrange it in their understanding for future use. And since this may be done in two ways, rightly

or wrongly, we need a science that shall ensure it being done rightly. To repudiate all theology could not stop theological reflection, but would only let it run riot with all manner of absurdities and superstitions." [1] Yet, on the other hand, those who would shut us up to an intellectual view of spirituality, who would make it a thing *only* of terminology, occupy the same position as the physicist who should limit nature or even our knowledge of nature to the treatises in his library. That, indeed, would be an amazing error, yet less inexcusable than the limitation of a living experience to the terminology in which it seeks to express its inexhaustible riches.

As a matter of fact, religion appeals to as distinct and real an experience as physical science does. As these two experiences must ultimately be one, it is reasonable to suppose that science and religion are convergent lines. Yet none the less certain is it that for the present they are broken and interrupted, and that only in the unity of our whole nature can that convergence come about. It would be as reasonable, then, for the religious man to ignore the elements of physics, as it is for the physicist to ignore the elements of the spiritual consciousness. Both

[1] George Tyrrell, "Lex Credendi," p. 144.

are equally well attested. It is no more reasonable to infer force from phenomena than it is to infer the elements of the spiritual consciousness from the transformation of the common life, the deliverance from habit and inherited tendency, and the conduct of the soul under suffering. The evidences of the Spiritual Life are as many and as convincing as it is in the nature of life to afford, while within all men there is that spiritual affinity by which, once it is aroused, experiment can be added to observation, and the reality of the experience "scientifically" tested.

4

What is "hypothetical" prayer? or what would it be were it possible? The pathetic cry said to have been wrung from Thistlewood, the Cato Street conspirator, might furnish an instance: "O God (if there be a God) save my soul (if I have a soul)." From one point of view we cannot reflect on that extraordinary utterance without agreeing with Romanes: "it seems so impossible to pray hypothetically." Yet from another point of view, who shall say that even that was not a prayer? May it not have been the cry of the Spirit breaking through the bondage of intellectual obsession? —a modern instance of the cry, "Lord, I be-

lieve, help thou mine unbelief!" Whether this was the case with Thistlewood we cannot know; but it certainly is the case with hundreds of men and women to-day whom the age has rendered sensitive to intellectual considerations of one kind and another. They await the union of the head and heart. And their hesitancy is largely begotten of a strained psychology, which insists on isolating the "intellect" and giving it a permissive function like that of a government department. We need to regain our entity, and we shall not do so until we give the heart its ancient leadership. Then indeed:

> Mind and heart according well
> Shall make one music as before,
> But vaster.

Meanwhile, will not our sincerity best be witnessed by our committing ourselves to the leadership of the heart, or, as we have called it, the spiritual instinct?

People do not sufficiently realize how the demand for an intellectual or philosophical religion would, if obtainable, change the very character of religion. In no connection is this so clearly seen as in that of Prayer, which, indeed, as the expression of our consciousness

of God, may be said to be the very root of religion. For in an "intellectual" religion, prayer would be a totally different thing from what it has been for spiritual men. It would be confined to a rational preferment of requests, it would be addressed not to a Father, but to an impersonal authority. Similarly, when we require the solution of intellectual problems before we commit ourselves to prayer, we little reflect what a strange affair prayer would become under conditions that assume the absence of anything like faith in the conduct of life.

5

Suppose we take two aspects of what is known as "the prayer difficulty," and observe how the "difficulty" disappears when the spiritual principle is admitted.

Prayer is still regarded by a number of people as answering almost solely to *petition*. This is not, certainly, an entirely false notion of prayer, but it is not the primary or innermost notion. No doubt the popularity of it is largely due to the prominence which petition of necessity holds in all forms of worship. It is scarcely possible to imagine a number of persons engaging in Communion with the Source of their life except on a basis of petition. And here, as

elsewhere, our twofold nature, as individuals and as social units, must be borne in mind, and what is characteristic of the one must not be allowed to displace what is essential to the other. While prayer may be inarticulate to the individual, yet, as a member of a spiritual society, the individual is obliged to concur in petitionary prayer. This is insufficiently recognized by those who turn away from public worship. Even in public devotion, however, prayer means far more than the preferment of an array of requests. It is, however imperfectly, a re-union of spirit with spirit. We are not sufficiently impressed with the tremendous spectacle of a number of persons kneeling in the presence of an Unseen Power. If only we could see this freshly and for the first time, it would be found to be evidence of a consciousness of the Unseen, overwhelmingly impressive. Now, it is just that consciousness which is of the essence of prayer; consciousness of the Being and Love of God, together with loyalty to Him.

He who will thus open his heart to the Father, inasmuch as he too shares the divine nature, will find the serenity which Jesus manifested. He who knows prayer in this primary

sense will be careless of petition and unvexed by problem. For him it is a meeting of spirit with spirit, of child with parent, of lover with lover. So to say "Thy will be done," so to bow before the Sovereign Love, letting its fullness penetrate hidden thought and motive, as the sea, when the flood-gates are open, fills and overflows the shrunken river, is to enter into harmony with the Divine.

And it is just because prayer operates on this spirital plane that all kinds of *petition* have their justification. This may seem something of a paradox; but on a little reflection it will be obvious enough. Constituted as we are, can we imagine ourselves genuinely engaged in any kind of intercourse in which there is no room to express all those naïve hopes and aims and anxieties which compose so large a part of our thoughts at any given time? Can we open our heart to our friend if we are to make constant reservations? And how are we to commune with the Father in anything like sincerity if all the while we are to be on our guard against committing ourselves to an unphilosophic position? Can we imagine a more incongruous position than that of a man restraining the instinctive motions of his soul in deference to theories of

natural law? Such limitations ought not seriously to intrude for a moment on the clear imperative of the spiritual instinct. For what are these laws which threaten to paralyze our prayer? They are not laws in a *legal* sense, not limitations which God has imposed on Himself. They are merely statements, the result of man's observation in the exceedingly restricted domain of exact science. Again and again they have to be revised, as the phenomena they embrace are assimilated to some greater group. Science is full of miracles, full, that is, of isolated occurrences which, when "explained," necessitate the revision of some previous formula. "Laws," therefore, partake of the partial and approximate nature of all intellectual knowledge. And daring as the speculation may appear to some, it will not seem strange to those who hold by the principle of divine causation, to surmise that the ultimate law into which all observances are resolved should be found to be a law of prayer—of prayer vitally interpreted as harmony with the Divine Will.

Such a speculation at least illustrates the essential character of prayer as an expression of loyalty to the Father's will; a taking up, as it were, of our own spirit into His; a letting go

of ourselves towards God in respect of everything that concerns us. And if our education towards this great end should consist in the exercise of petitions which may appear trivial or "irrational," or even, outside the chamber of our own heart, contemptuous, must we not begin to learn somewhere? The scaffolding is temporary, "out of place," but without it the building can never rise heavenward from its solid base. What are all our concerns here, our hopes, fears, sorrows, and delights, but a kind of scaffolding for the building of that which is eternal? What other object do we perceive for them? Human life, we have said, without its spiritual tendency, is simply inexplicable. Then of what use are all the petty concerns of life unless they are pressed into the service of that tendency? Surely there is profound philosophy in those words of the apostle: "In everything by prayer and supplication thankfully make known your requests unto God."

And does not evolution witness to a similar economy? How crude and paltry are man's early efforts towards music and art, how conflicting his "guesses at truth," how misleading his attempts at social organization! Yet the

instinct is true, and wisdom is justified of her children. And the individual man, in his spiritual evolution, has the same poor material to work upon at first, yet woe to him if he take it not, and therefrom shape his destiny. "To him that hath shall be given," and it is better to give utterance, at the prompting of the soul, to the humblest and poorest desire that we *have*, than to sit down in silence for that "manifestation of the sons of God" which only comes by action.

One of the most beautiful sights we can see is that of a group of children clustered about their father's knee, telling him the doings of the day and making known their childish wants. Does it ever enter their minds that he already knows the most part of what they tell him, or that their wants may be inconsistent with his discipline, or that in any case his wisdom has probably foreseen their requirements? Does their childish prattle strike us, the spectators, as incongruous? Should we deem it more seemly if, with praeternatural restraint, they kept silence? Is not the bare idea of such an attitude an artistic blunder in a scene so naïve and homely?

And is the same kind of attitude less a blunder when we pass to a scene which is, if

anything, more naïve and homely still? To remain mutely conscious of, or acquiescent in, the power and knowledge of the Father, is surely to forgo the very privilege of love! Surely if intercourse has any meaning at all, it covers the artless communion of child with father. Surely to allow intellectual conceptions even a place in the practice of devotion is like refraining from communion with a loved one for fear of a possible breach of etiquette. In other words prayer, like love, like the lisping of the child, like the devotion of the mother, transcends the intellectual altogether. It is the abandonment of the soul to God.

6

Here, however, occurs the other aspect of the prayer difficulty: How can we reconcile this loyalty to God's will, this resignation of all into His hands, with a continuance of our own activity? Is not the logical outcome of such loyalty a mere indifference to circumstances, or at least a cessation of effort on our part? The way in which the spiritual principle resolves this difficulty can best be illustrated by turning to a page of actual life. The page is a dark one, but common enough. It brings before us a man wrestling in prayer all night long, in the

intervals of nursing, for his wife's life. Medical theories were conflicting, and afforded a glimmer of hope. So the man did like them of old, and cried unto God in his distress. Not one night only, but night and day for weeks, for months, his cry arose. Then at length when hope dwindled and his wife's sufferings were the only answer to his prayer, despair strangled his cry. Still he strove for her with brain and hands, as it is the lot of men to strive, and the reflex of this struggle in his heart was dark rebellion.

Putting aside for the moment his struggle, was he wrong to pray as he did? In a sense he was. His very importunity was a reflection on God's love for His own. It was a contradiction in terms. It imperiously questioned the Love which Itself made prayer possible. Some people would say that for that very reason his prayer was unanswered, but that it is a conception of the Divine Will which will find no place here. God does not use even the earthly life of one individual to correct the false notions of another. The issues of life and death are far removed from our ken in a maze of causes of which we can trace no single thread very far. If, however, loyalty to God's love had

been the inspiration of the husband's prayers, he would have seen, in the corresponding attitude of his wife's spirit, what was the Answer, the present, the Eternal Answer to those prayers; and he would have gained measureless strength from the contemplation of her calm and lowly triumph. Instead of Heaven being a void and the world the abode of ironic forces, he would have known that he and his beloved were strangers and pilgrims, immortal children whom the shocks of mortality were bringing in triumph to their home in God.

But in that case, what of the struggle? Is it possible to reconcile resignation with striving? Here, as everywhere else in our present life, there is paradox; and in the paradox lies the truth. Strive we *must*. The struggle for the life of others is only a diviner aspect of the instinct of self-preservation. Ever must man strive to the uttermost for the life that has been committed, or has committed itself, to his care. But strive for what? Strive for ownership? Strive for a continuation of the companionship? Only, if this life is all. If the spirit is quenched for ever in the mortal ashes, then yes, man is striving for possession, tearing from the irresistible unyielding Death the frail life it claims for

its prey. Certainly here there can be no resignation. Death triumphs. The prey is secured, and the striver is dashed backward to the mocking earth, baffled and broken.

To such a terrible conception the facts of life give the lie. The calmly triumphant spirit passing on its way is no prey to a grim monster of primitive imagination. When in the triumph of Jesus Christ it was said that death had lost its sting, what was meant? that death had lost any attribute of personality which man in his ignorance had given it, that it was what modern science now knows it to be, a process only. In that conception the grave is for ever tenantless. There is no loss. Therefore, while we are bound to strive by a law of our being for the preservation of the spirit in its physical conditions, we are also bound in obedience to a higher law to relinquish any fancied possession of that spirit; bound to feel no break in the comradeship begun; bound to *resign*, that is, to re-assign, or assign back, to waive ownership in respect of Him with whom the prior possession lies, even the Father of Spirits. And thus the paradox yields its truth: there is no loss because there is no possession; because there is no possession there is no *baffled* strife. Strife for

physical well-being there is, but not strife for the Godward spirit, for that transcends all strife.

The absence of this resignation, the cessation from prayer in the case before us, told at once upon the man's own strength and the quality of his service. For the saddest thing about lives bereft of spiritual communion is that, high as their intention may be, they are in a greater or less degree unfitted for service. The reflex of a struggle, inspired merely by desire, however high that desire may be, is ever a dark rebellion; and in the spirit of rebellion nothing is possible. The hand may not be fevered, or the judgement reckless, or the human love weary in its task. Yet in this spirit of conflict, of grim fighting against infinite odds, there is, and must be, a strain that is perceptible in the slightest action. Love is the mightiest of motives, but without the Love of God it fails of its own agony. It was never meant to stand alone, and he who loses hold upon the Love of God voluntarily forfeits the guidance, the inspiration, the control which his powers demand.

7

In the acknowledgement that we are Another's lies the triumph of the human spirit.

Without God man is alone, no matter how closely the social bond unites him to his fellows. For all men are but as one Man; the deep craving of the soul is for One, "not ourselves." Mere kindred, brotherhood, race, do but stifle and perplex the soul, which yearns for a "spirit of adoption." Throughout Nature the mutual attraction of different temperaments and types is a parable of this. Like kinds tend to sterility. And humanitarianism is sterile; for it is "the Spirit that giveth life."

Round the secularist life there often gathers a halo of beauty and tenderness, which is very attractive, but which owes much to the atmosphere of wistfulness in which it is lived. We owe an immeasurable debt to those who, in the emphasis of sincerity—which they interpret in its limited intellectual sense—have forgone their spiritual heritage. Well indeed will it be for the Church that she find a place, if not in her devotion, at least in her discipline of life, for the "saints of rationalism." But in proportion to our debt great is our sorrow. Oh that to their unflinching courage they had joined a radiant faith! that their "saintliness" had derived its inspiration from the source which made a St. Francis, an Augustine, a St. Bernard, not only

witnesses to purity and truth, but flames of fire transmuting the gross elements about them.

It was a happy inspiration that chose the phrase, "the *eclipse* of faith," to describe the condition of those who attempt to view religion *entirely* through the medium of intellect. When we turn to the biography of honest doubt in which the last century proved so prolific, what do we find to be the real cause of the alienation of men and women from the Christian faith? Was it the abolition of the historic foundations of that faith? Was it that the spiritual consciousness yielded to analysis, leaving not a wrack behind? We may confidently say that neither the destruction of the vision nor the object of vision accounts for the phenomenon. It was literally an eclipse; the intrusion of an opaque body of physical methods between the spiritual consciousness and its object. Read thus, a very large proportion of modern biography forms a most instructive page in the history of Divine revelation. Let us turn, *e.g.*, to the life of the late Professor Romanes—a life so thoroughly representative, in its intellectual unrest, of the day in which its sojourn here was passed—and contrast the closing words of that

biography with the disquietude of the confession which heads this essay:

"No one had ever suffered more from the eclipse of faith, no one had ever been more honest in dealing with himself and his difficulties. The change that came over his mental attitude may seem almost incredible to those who knew him only as a scientific man; it does not seem so to the few who knew anything of his *inner life*.[1] To them the impression given is not of an enemy changed into a friend, antagonism altered into submission; rather it is of one who for long had been bearing a heavy burden on his shoulders bravely and patiently, and who at last has had it lifted from him, and lifted so gradually that he could not tell the exact moment when he found it gone and himself standing like Pilgrim at the foot of the Cross."[2]

Yes, it had all along been there, but misled by the tendency of the age, he had conceived it unmeet to "let himself go" towards the

[1] The same fact expresses itself more subtly in Mr. R. H. Hutton's comment on John Stuart Mill: "Mill's progress from a narrow and barren set of notions to a true religion of what he himself calls 'hope,' seems to show that *he had a nature far richer than his intellect*."—"Contemporary Thought and Thinkers," vol. i, p. 195.

[2] "Life and Letters," p. 351.

things of the Spirit until the spiritual instinct would be denied no longer, and he escaped the thraldom of the intellectual idiom, who all his lifetime had been subject to bondage.

8

The "eclipse of faith" was, after all, only an eclipse. The obsession of intellect is passing. The things of the Spirit shine out again. But meanwhile many have been misled. They have been taught to fix their eyes upon the ground, to trace dimly the footprints of the Man of Sorrows, instead of raising their eyes to His risen and compassionate face. They have been told that the doors of the inner chambers are locked, and that philosophy has the secret key in jealous keeping, whereas the closed door will yield to a touch of the will, disclosing the mystic shrine and the light that has never been quenched.

Vast numbers of men and women are living their life outside that door: their actions, their words, their faces, betray the fact. The ordinary routine, which is the test of energy, is a burden to them. The marvel is that they sustain it at all! By and by an undue strain either of crisis or temptation comes upon them, and the mere

animal energy—bravely exerted though it has been—gives out. There is a "run" on the reserve, and the mental and physical powers stop payment. The life of our great cities is full every day of such collapses. Only a few of them appear in the newspapers, but the number of those is sufficiently alarming. The increase of insanity and suicide points in the same direction. We are attempting to meet the exigences of life, the strain of business, the pressure of competition, the countless worries that await us every day on a mere tithe of our available energy. How can the mind maintain its equilibrium when the spirit has no resting-place? Without the certainty of a serene trust how can we sit sufficiently loose to chance and change, not to be tormented by anxiety or stricken down by failure? Without the compassion of God, how can we, who are but grown-up children, save our lives from the strain of duty and the ravages of reaction? And in the collective aspect of life, how much of the fierce haste, the unrestricted competition, the narrowing margin of leisure that cripples our life to-day is traceable to the lack of anything to control the mechanic operation of economic forces—forces which we ourselves in our relin-

quishment of the spiritual life have made godless and brutal.

9

We have hazarded the speculation that prayer — taken in its larger sense as an entering into harmony with the will of God—is the ultimate law of Nature. In the same sense, prayer is the solution of the social problem. Thus both the theoretic and practical problems of life are to be met by an exertion of that inner life to which suffering affords us the clue. Our social disruption, the difficulty we find in reconciling "self" with the "other-self," is a part of the penalty we inherit, a phase of our spiritual disease. It will yield only to the health of the soul. Only by loving God supremely, by being conscious in all things of His presence, will men learn to dwell together in unity.

10

In conclusion, let us return to the main thought in these pages, since in this connection it affords us a clue too important to be overlooked. It is suffering, or rather, the conduct of the soul under suffering, which gives us our strongest evidence of the Spiritual Life; and this Life consists in communion with God, it is

to the same fact of suffering that we owe this, the highest possibility of our nature. Who then can wonder that those who saw in Jesus Christ the power and grandeur of a life lived by prayer should feel that His life of limitation and pain had brought them into contact, into potential union with the Father's loving will? That as He hung on the Cross, suffering and triumphing over the last possibilities of pain, He revealed the secret of a world at one with God? The element of discord in man's heart, however it had come there, was not there irrevocably. Spirit with spirit could meet; God and man be at one. Surely in this sense if in no other—and there is also another—a world of meaning lies in the despised doctrine of the Atonement. Reconciliation through suffering is a law of the spiritual life; reconciliation once offered upon Calvary and ever carried on and made effectual in all lives of lowly triumph.

VI

THE PROBLEM AND THE CONFLICT

Much of the intellectual difficulty of Evil would disappear if we were more resolute to combat the evil in ourselves, and less anxious to explain evil in the abstract.—*Essays in Paradox.*

I

IT will clear the ground to observe at the outset that evil owes its *problematic* character entirely to the Spiritual Life. For the problem consists in reconciling calamity, suffering, and sin, with the wisdom and love of a Father. But, since the personality of God is a fact for the spiritual consciousness alone, and since intellect does not and apparently cannot demonstrate human freedom, it is difficult to see how, within the narrow scope of intellect, evil can be a "problem" at all.

As a matter of fact we owe so much more to the spiritual consciousness than we are ever quite aware of, that it is almost impossible for us to reduce ourselves to the dead level of those

who were once "without hope and without God in the world." Even those who, in the jargon of the day, call themselves "purely pagan," show nothing more plainly than the possession of an instinctive Christianity. In spite, however, of the difficulty we find in parting with the heritage of our fathers, it is necessary that we should try to be consistent. We cannot in one and the same breath agnosticate the spiritual world and reason about that which the spiritual world alone reveals. The consistent necessitarian objects to our asking: "Why should evil be permitted?" To him the bare idea of the "permission" of evil belongs to the childhood of the race. Evil, he tells us, is not "permitted"; it *happens*. And because it and all things else happen, he equally objects when we speak of the freedom of man to choose between right and wrong. To him the universe, man included, is just a "happening," of the whole course of which our observation has formulated a few statements which, with amazing confidence, we call "laws." So that man's "choice" is an hallucination, his action being in reality determined by the operation of forces as exacting and relentless as that of gravitation.

To this attitude there is no problem. All

that "happens" is perfectly clear, because perfectly necessary. There is no reconciliation to make, for there are no ideas in opposition. Of course, from the spiritual standpoint, the attitude is seen to be nothing but the obsession of mathematics in contradiction to experience. We cannot, however, convince the necessitarian of this, for, himself the *reductio ad absurdum* of his own position, he deliberately rejects the spiritual standpoint, closing his eyes to the evidence, and remaining on purely intellectual ground. Before congratulating him, however, on having eliminated the problem of the ages, it is due to remind him that it is not, as a rule, the ease of a position which establishes its probability, nor does life always confer its sanction on the most obvious courses. It is also due to expect him to act consistently with the logic of his position, and, having eliminated spiritual experience, to rid society of all the safeguards which that experience has provided; to abolish the "injustice" of a criminal procedure, the only justification for whose penalties lies in the assumption that man is "free." For in the absence of that justification it is as monstrous to punish a man for murdering another as to punish him for squinting. If man is not free,

then the only means of furthering virtue—which, to the necessitarian, is nothing more than a social convenience, and often of very doubtful value at that—lies in the application of coercive measures, in making it *impossible* for man by thought, word, or deed, to offend against the divine majesty of Society; in other words, to render him a perfectly efficient social machine, and, by so doing, to eliminate his "moral" nature, and destroy his connotation as a "human" being.

So far is this conclusion from being "strained" that it will be found to be the direct tendency of every movement to-day which does not spring from a recognition of the Spiritual Life. Nearly all our secular education, nearly all our socialism and humanitarianism are permeated with the desire to render man automatically good by eliminating choice as far as possible. The desire has its root in the denial of goodness, and the substitution, in its place, of "social efficiency." And "socially efficient" man may become, in some such fashion as the bee or the ant; but it will be at the expense not only of his spiritual, but of his moral nature also. It may be that we are, in this way, on the eve of witnessing an impressive reversion to type. Be

that as it may, of one thing we can be absolutely certain: that it is not in the nature of things for morality to survive the neglect of the spiritual instinct. Such a survival would contradict the logic of life, since "freedom" and the accompanying sense of responsibility, which make evil the thing it has hitherto been conceived, spring directly from the spiritual consciousness.

2

Pressing in the wake of the pure necessitarian is a whole host of sentimentalists, who, scandalized by the fact of evil, let their imagination run riot in vague conjecture. They seem to postulate the omnipotence of God only to reflect upon His moral government. Why, they cry, could not an Almighty Creator have made humanity incapable of sinning and of suffering? The only reply to those who raise this question is that certainly He *could*, and that in the stones and clods about their feet they will find the sort of thing which they desire God to have made them. Just as the coercive measures which the necessitarian seeks to apply in order to secure man's social efficiency will destroy his moral nature, so, in creating man incapable of suffering and of sin, God would have made a totally different being.

Evil ceases to be a problem when it ceases to be a conflict. To meet the requirements of the necessitarian and the sentimentalist, the Utopia of the one and the dream of the other, man becomes mechanical, not moral; the spiritual is eliminated.

3

For whom, then, does the problem of evil arise? For those who have every desire to accept the witness of the spiritual consciousness, but who are seriously deterred from doing so by the presence of the sinister facts of life. To these, the Life Spiritual seems to contradict itself; for, on the one hand, its consciousness witnesses to the wisdom and love of God, and the freedom of man; and, on the other hand, by this very witness, it discloses a principle of opposition in the world. And the question for such genuine doubters to ask is: How does the spiritual consciousness itself regard evil in its manifold forms? For it must be plain that that which alone discloses evil alone can afford a clue to its mystery.

Yet here again the forms of evil are so manifold, and so complex in their relations to one another that the subject seems too vast for human thought, and the inquirer is tempted at

the outset to put it aside. There are, *e.g.*, the indifference of "nature" to man's welfare, the problem of animal pain, the tragedy of ignorance, the terrible phenomena of what is called unmerited suffering, the pain and death of little children; the ruthless impartiality that seems to preside over the material destiny of evil and good. Surely beneath this, our common legacy, it is pardonable to cry:

> I falter where I firmly stood,
> And, falling 'neath my load of cares,
> Fall on the world's great altar stairs.

not knowing whether it be the altar of sacrifice or of grace. Pardonable it is, no doubt, in His regard Who witnesses not unmoved the baffled efforts of His children. But if what we have said is true, if life speaks to us "through the lips of suffering, lest suffering should contract," we cannot raise these questions and then leave them in the devout hope they may find a solution "behind the veil." At least we must inquire what light the spiritual consciousness casts on the evil that men *do*, and the suffering which falls to the lot of the innocent, and the apparent necessity of evil in the evolution of man. And if the spiritual consciousness can satisfy us on these vital difficulties, we may be

justified in assuming that on further inquiry, and especially in the *practice* of the devout life, we shall receive increasing light.[1]

4

Accepting, provisionally at least, the testimony of the spiritual consciousness, we ask what light it throws on the evil which men *do*, concerning which so many explanations are proposed to-day.

According to the spiritual instinct the ultimate goal of our progress is God, increasing communion with Him, increasing likeness to His purity, love, and wisdom. Here, however, as elsewhere, development can only be secured at the *risk* of deterioration. Thus the spiritual instinct has always spoken of sin as a departure from the living God, a missing of the mark, a violation of, or rebellion against, an order otherwise perfect. Under whatever figure sin is

[1] Among other works treating of this subject from a spiritual standpoint, the reader is directed to "The Genesis of Evil," by Dr. Samuel Cox; "Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals," by the late Canon MacColl; "The Necessity of Pain," by Mr. Dixey, in the Oxford House Papers, 2nd series; the first sermon in Momerie's "Origin of Evil"; and particularly to Mr. Illingworth's brief but profoundly suggestive Essay on "The Problem of Pain," in "Lux Mundi."

brought before us by the great interpreters of the Spiritual Life, it is always as something abnormal, the "norm" being always God. God's will is the life of the soul: consequently whenever the soul is in opposition to that Will it is, to that extent, in a state of disease.

Philosophic optimism—or meliorism, as it is written nowadays—regards evil as the raw material of goodness, or the machinery by which the raw material is turned into the finished product. "Evil," it says, "is good in the making." This is a view which is too detached for spirituality to take. The spiritual instinct regards evil, *i.e.*, sin, as the living organism feels the germs of disease.[1] There is even a sense in which at every breath we draw in this spiritual life we are conscious of pain. This pain is the expression of the conflict hourly going on between the life of the spirit and its enemies. The man attacked by disease cannot conceal from himself either his pain or his foreboding; both, however, are healthy symptoms inasmuch as both indicate a measure of vitality engaged in resisting the invader. Both the

[1] Amiel declares that the head and front of the world's controversy is the reality of sin. "What is it that brings salvation?" he defines as the question of humanity.

pain and the foreboding will cease in one of two ways: either in the resistance being successful, and the organism attaining "perfect health"; or in its approaching dissolution. In the one case pain is overcome by life; in the other extinguished in death.

Now, the loathing which the spiritual instinct has for sin and the terror of it as a departure from the living God are not, as a certain school of moralists would have us believe, morbid experiences. On the contrary, they are healthy; they are the feelings aroused in the spiritual part of us by the invasion of sin; they are like the rush of the countless healthy corpuscles that swarm to overthrow the invading parasite. All the literature of confession, all the agonies men have been moved to utter from the days of the *De Profundis* till now, are the clamour of such a host, coursing through the life-blood of humanity, bent upon deliverance. And individually and collectively this clamour is known as the "sense of sin." It will only be silenced in one of two ways, either in the attainment of purity, or in the loss of the Spiritual Life. In the one case mortality is swallowed up of life; in the other the wages of sin are paid in death.

In attempting to trace sin to the survival of

animal instinct and appetite, the evolutionist is misled by mere resemblances. As our nature has a physical basis, it must be that many of our actions have an animal quality. But to say that sin is "an inconvenient survival of appetite" gives us no information whatever. All "survival of appetite" is not "inconvenient." What then is the particular "inconvenience" which for ages has deluded man under the guise of sin? The evolutionist answers: "social inutility," that is to say, we feel certain actions to be wrong, because they are, socially, pernicious or useless.

But how does that constitute them "wrong"? Why should not the individual follow those courses which promote his own pleasure or interests, utterly regardless of their effect on the community? The evolutionist replies that in devoting himself to the furtherance of the general welfare, the individual is realizing his highest self. That position is non-proven, and in the absence of anything more ultimate than the evolutionist offers us, it must remain non-proven. But even if it were true, what would it imply? It would make the whole of conduct turn upon self-regard! Man's very abnegation would be motived by advancement! And so an

unspiritual altruism turns out at bottom to be nothing else than the reasoned selfishness of Nietsche. Both are grounded in self; and in the absence of an absolute ethic, it is just as legitimate to gratify or "develop" self directly, as by the roundabout method of altruism.

5

It cannot be sufficiently deplored that the appeal from Christian pulpits to forsake a life of sin is often put on lower grounds than this. There can be no other valid appeal than the claim of God on the *whole of life.* This underlies and illuminates the personal claim made by Christ as God. Certainly it is true that it may be pain and loss that awaken the sinner to a recognition of his higher life, just as it was the hunger of the prodigal which turned him homeward. And so infinite is the Divine pity that the feeblest Godward tendency is purified and raised to its true motive in God. Until, however, that motive is present, "conversion" cannot be said to be begun. Its true note is not the cry that rang in Christian's ears as he fled the city of Destruction: "Life, life, eternal life"; but the great "confession" of Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God."

But, it is asked, has not the spiritual consciousness precisely the same motive? Does it not hate sin because sin is an enemy of the soul or self? The answer is, No; and the question itself, so frequently urged, shows how little conception people have of what the Spiritual Life really is. Sin is hated because it is an infringement of the claims of God over the whole being. The Spiritual Life is from beginning to end an endeavour after union with God, not for the security of self, but because God's will is supreme and His love overwhelming. Here, and here alone in all the world, is there an absolute ethic, in which "right" is God's will, and "wrong" our own perverted will. And though often, alas! in spiritual history the high claim of God's authority has been made to cover gross unrighteousness, though "*divine* philosophy" has been "procuress to the Lords of hell," that has only come about by men turning a deaf ear to the spiritual instinct within them. It is not the ethic that has failed, but man who has abused his freedom in disregarding it.

The spiritual consciousness, then, invests the moral conflict with a personal atmosphere; and the reality of a man's spiritual life is tested by his sensitiveness to sin and its agencies, in this

personal sense of an attempt to defraud God of His due.

6

And if this is the touchstone of spiritual life in the individual it follows that the moral health of the community is similarly tested. Now, few things are more striking among us to-day than the number and popularity of the attempts to explain away the sense of sin. It is "crude," it is "vulgar," it is "mediaeval." And underlying these attempts there is, we are assured, "a greater revulsion from sin than the race has hitherto experienced." In that case surely the obvious course would be to hold no parley with disease, but to build up the constitution to resist the invader. The patient may delude himself—and often does—that the symptoms are not those of disease at all; and if he has never been in very good health the delusion may, for a time, be sustained. This latter course seems to be the one we are taking to-day, and if for a while we seem to succeed in it, it is because our vitality is low, because we have no proper realization of what spiritual health is.

7

There are three modern ways of regarding sin which are deadly enemies to the Spiritual

Life. These are the aesthetic, the pantheistic, and the ethical. According to the first "sin is another name for ugliness, and good in its highest significance is another name for beauty." "The words and phrases by which we designate moral evil are all more or less rough descriptions of some aspect of ugliness in human life." "We shall best sustain our enthusiasm for an ideal of life, at once rational and emotional, if we . . . discern in all true ethical endeavour the satisfaction of an aesthetic need. To be beautiful within and without is the final significance of human life.[1] This is our language when we have transformed sin from a spiritual disease to an artistic blunder. It springs partly from a desire to win the attention of those who decline to hold with anything so unrefined as the "sense of sin"; and partly in defiance of that very regrettable tendency of bourgeois Christianity to forget that beauty is an attribute of the Divine. So far the motives are commendable, and yet what a travesty is the result! The old order changeth with a vengeance! It is turned right round. For it was "the beauty of holiness" which was the theme of Hebrew song,

[1] "The Religion of Nature and of Human Experience," by W. J. Jupp, chap. xi.

and "the beauty of goodness" which the most illustrious and spiritually-minded of the Greeks pursued. But here we have the holiness of beauty, while sin and ugliness are made synonymous! A few pages further on our author furnishes us with a list of the inartistic works of darkness, a list which invites comparison with the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. But there are certain sins in the latter list which Mr. Jupp does not place upon his index, and one wonders whether the omission is one of oversight, or whether Mr. Jupp really means that certain acts committed by "refined" persons in "refined" surroundings are not sins at all (though conscience shriek against the deed), but rather fulfilments of carnal appetite worthy of a place among the *acta sanctorum*? When Burke suggested that vice might lose half its evil by losing all its grossness, he spoke in rhetorical ardour, and under the spell of a chivalrous emotion; none the less were his words the most immoral that ever escaped a great and discerning man. But Burke is nowhere to Mr. Jupp, who, by eliminating the grossness, leaves no vice at all!

Common sense needs no persuading to revolt from such obvious absurdity. And this is the pass to which we are brought—for Mr. Jupp's

book represents an increasingly popular attitude—when we ignore the spiritual consciousness, when we seek, in our narrow modern culture, to make one aspect of God's existence cover the whole, when we allow our sense of personal freedom to be enfeebled, and spurn the legacy of experience which the ages have handed down. And the pity of it is that in taking this attitude good men so completely cut away the ground from beneath their feet. For all this aesthetic feeling is at bottom a desire for the realization of the Kingdom of God in social justice, civil righteousness, and humane conditions of life and toil. It is all one with the stirrings of the spiritual instinct within us, and yet we will not avail ourselves of the power to which that instinct directly points! What a really strong plea for the beauty and order of life Mr. Jupp's book would have been had it been inspired by a passionate longing for men to give up their sins for God's sake, "rendering themselves servants unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life"! Shame on us who, with our spiritual heritage, find it possible to tolerate the slum and the pauper ward. Shame on us that we desire so little that the beauty of the Lord our God should be upon us; but the

reason is that we too have forgotten God, that our heart is in other things, in our gains and our pleasures. And so the Church, which in ascetic devotion should afford overwhelming evidence of things unseen, is largely occupied to-day in the art of making the best of both worlds.

8

In no connection, perhaps, does a spiritual faith feel the inadequacy of modern thought more than when the latter minimizes sin on the score of a poetic conception of God. It is the fashion nowadays to say: "If God exist, must He not be everywhere, in every action and every thought of His creatures; how then can there be anything in rebellion against His Will?"

This difficulty arises from confusing the aspects in which God is present in us. There is a sense in which the conception of the Indian poet is true: "As the soul is in the body, so God is in the world"; or as St. Augustine far more forcibly puts it: "If God were to cease from *speaking* the Word, even for a moment, heaven and earth would vanish." This is a very necessary and very beautiful aspect of the truth. The whole truth, however, of our relations with an infinite Being cannot possibly be put into one conception.

Just as the life that courses through our veins nourishes, and, in a sense, *is*, the malignant growth which, if not checked, will destroy us; just as the same will invigorate the judgement as well as the indiscretions which override the judgement, so within universal personality there can exist the widest differences, because of individuality and the abuse of that freedom in which individuality is based. And the peculiar horror of sin, from the spiritual standpoint, is that it is a malignant growth, a perverted choice, a disturbance in the Divine harmony and order. This is another aspect of our relation with God, and a most necessary one.

For if we try to rest in the former aspect only, we are forced into the conclusion that "right" and "wrong" are equally sanctioned by the Divine will—an idea which is repugnant to our plain experience, and either makes God non-moral, or else makes nonsense of our desire to yield Him His due. And further, we are left to base the moral sanction in social welfare, *i.e.*, ultimately, as we have seen, in self.

This way of regarding evil, as a necessary part of the education of the race, with which we are all familiar under the guise of the New Theology, is supposed to result from a great

unifying process. Yet so far from giving us unity, it breaks down exactly where its strength is supposed to lie. It brings God intimately near, yet it has to ground its ethical appeal elsewhere. This being the case, it is not strange that it should fail to give us any clue to the facts of spiritual experience. It leaves humanity as great a riddle as does the materialistic hypothesis. The sense of sin remains what the soul knows it to be, a miserable and humiliating failure to yield God His due, the pain of a baffled and wounded love.

9

Does the ethical movement of our day, which, like the others, proceeds by ignoring the spiritual consciousness, yield any more intelligible account of evil than theirs? As we have seen, its logical implication is to base all morality in self-regard. Putting this aside, however, for the moment, what account has it to give of the sense of sin?

Morality it regards as a deposit, so to speak, of a vast number of selected tendencies favourable to the social welfare. Its weakness lies in the merely static view which it takes of the moral idea, as though it were a thing settled by vote at pan-ethical congresses since the world began.

Now it is perfectly true that morality is largely the outgrowth of custom selected by social convenience. But all those customs are built up of individual actions. Like the coral reefs, their bed rock is made up of the innumerable remains of once-living organisms. What inspired these actions? What ruled the blind upward striving far down beneath the surface, in the dark and awful deeps of prehistoric ages? Was it social welfare? or was it a tumultuous pressing upward towards the light, the parent day, the life-giving sun? The ethicist forgets the genesis of the moral idea, he neglects the tragic circumstances with which the growth of the moral feeling is invested, the gloom and glory of spiritual travail, the ashes of martyrs, the tears of penitence. In a word, he neglects the dynamics of spiritual experience.

And neglecting this, so far as history is concerned, he enfeebles his whole position as concerns present conduct. For if morality is the outcome of spiritual travail, it will not be maintained at lower cost. Morality is a life, not an etiquette, and it can no more be sustained by prescriptive ethics than the health of the body can be sustained by the theory of medicine. Both are good in their place. We have great need to be assured that for every atom of con-

siderateness and service which we withhold from our fellows, the exact equivalent in *loss* is registered in ourselves. But nothing is more obvious than the inadequacy of such a fact as a motive for even social service—let alone the inner life of the soul. The body is kept in health by eating, drinking, and exercising its functions; and the life of the spirit is maintained in the same fashion after a spiritual order. The analogy may seem somewhat gross, but that is only because our conception of the Spiritual Life has become so dull and feeble.

10

No attempt to explain man's life apart from the spiritual consciousness can obtain for long. That fact in all its sublime simplicity will assert itself positively or negatively. And if it bring with it sharp anguish and sorrow, and the stress of conflict, it also lifts man into another atmosphere, into a world where brute appetite and customary good, earthly beauty and squalor, alike seem the accidents of a little day, where Purity, Love, and Wisdom form the triune and eternal centre of his desire, where he is moved to cast himself on the threshold of a long-lost home with the cry upon his lips: "Thou hast made me for Thyself, O God. My soul longeth,

yea, even fainteth; my heart *and my flesh* cry out for the living God."

There is one Authority Who seems to appeal with equal force to the aesthetic and the ethical temper—that of Jesus Christ. To none was evil so repulsive as it was to Him, yet it is notable that the evil He most frequently denounced, that of the Scribes and Pharisees—was not aesthetically revolting at all. The repulsiveness of their evil could only be manifest to the inward sense of holiness, to the hidden eye of God. Again, few teachers have contributed so largely to the ethical output, so to speak, as He did, either originally or by selection; and yet His ethical maxims have moved men little compared with his personal appeal. Indeed, we are obliged to acknowledge still that His ethical maxims are full of practical difficulties for us, but there has never been any practical difficulty in realizing the words: "If any man will love me, he will keep my commandments, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode in him." Hundreds of men and women to-day who do not know what the word "ethical" means, understand that saying, and live their whole lives in the certainty of its accomplishment.

It is only when we regard sin as a child would regard any breach that would make it impossible for him to look again on the face of a beloved parent, that we can understand the horror of it. And it is only thus that we can aspire after purity. Sin is for the sinner the eclipse of God, the dark shadow which his lusts or the gods of his preference cast upon the Father's face. It was thus Jesus Christ regarded it; it was thus He came and lived and died that men in that shadow of death might again see the brightness of the glory; it was thus that He united with revulsion at sin an exceeding pity for the sinner, a pity whose magic called the saint from the harlot and made the extortioner just. Ethical and aesthetic notions of evil bring no necessary pity in their train, often they are nothing more than secular Pharisaism in contempt of an abstraction. They have no tears to set the heart at liberty, no smile to reach the sunless life. But the tender charity of the spiritual Christ reaches out the hand of deliverance, and brings life from the dead. The conception and the method of Jesus are so human! They are so human because humanity is so spiritual a thing.

II

The aspect of evil which, as a rule, presents

the greatest difficulty to those desirous of accepting the spiritual consciousness, arises when, as in some calamity, the physical consequences of one man's sin fall upon other and innocent persons. To many minds this is the most appalling and unanswerable mystery of evil. How can there be justice, they say, in such a transference of consequences?

In reality it is one of the most luminous facts in the world. For, in the first place, how could it be plain that the Spiritual Life was man's destiny if those who rejected its instinctive warnings incurred only the physical consequences of their error? Surely, in that case it is the material life that would be emphasized. In other words, by our neglect of the spiritual factor, we allow ourselves to be misled into postulating the very reverse of the retribution which our instinct of justice seems to demand. Few things better illustrate the way in which our modern material notions of life mislead us, and warp our conception of the government of the world. We say it is unjust that the sins of the fathers should be visited in physical limitation on the children; we say that when a train full of people is plunged into destruction owing to some fraudulent workmanship, it is the per-

petrator of the fraud who, in a just world, would have met with death. Into such a slough of moral platitude does forgetfulness of our true life plunge us!

The true penalty, the only just recompense for spiritual error, is spiritual loss. And this is exactly the penalty which, in every case of conscious error, is incurred. The man who disregards the spiritual instinct, who puts self before others, ease before duty, pleasure before purity, sins against his own destiny, and the penalty is meted out to him at once in a starved soul, an estrangement from the light and love of God. Even when the shame and horror of this are not fully realized in this world, the sinner, according to the spiritual conception, carries with him into the hidden domain a warped and limited personality, there to work out his development anew. And there or here the uttermost farthing of the debt is paid.

But, in the second place, why should the physical penalty, or, indeed, any part of the penalty, fall upon the innocent? In other words: Why should there be any such thing as unmerited suffering? The answer to this aspect of our difficulty throws us directly on to the nature and constitution of man.

Modern thought is impregnated with the conception—in its origin purely Christian—of the solidarity of the race, the conception that all who live form an organic whole. "We are members one of another." According to this conception, man has a twofold nature: he is an individual, and he is a social unit. Now, the union of these two aspects is so close that when we speak of a man as a "social unit" we do not mean merely that he is responsible for others, we mean that the fulfilment of his responsibilities in respect of others is *essential* to his own development as an individual. If, therefore, there were no *real risk* of others suffering as a consequence of his neglect, there could be no real call for him to exercise his responsibility; in other words he could not develop his individuality.

The reader will note that this is not the same thing as basing the moral sanction in self-development. We are here seeking in the nature and constitution of man some reason for the fact of unmerited suffering. And, constituted as he is, we find he could not fulfil that nature without at least the *risk* of such suffering. And so far from the benefit derived from such risk being his own development only, the possibility

of the loss and suffering of others is the only avenue by which the claim of others can reach the individual, conscious only, as he so often is, of his own individuality.

It should also be remembered that this suggestion is made from the standpoint of the Spiritual Life, where death does not mean extinction, and where adversity, in one form or another, usually results in liberating and developing the higher nature. So that where the risk, neglected, brings its consequences, those issues, momentous as they are, are not necessarily evil.

And, once more, if it is objected: why should our spiritual development turn on even the possibility of suffering, we must recollect our admission at the outset, that if our life did not turn on these alternatives of evil, we should not be men, but some other order of being. And while it is in the last degree vain for us to speculate on the kind of beings we might have been, it is open for us to realize the intelligibility of a great educative system, which, constituted as we are, is the only way of educating us.

If, then, the wrong-doer only were affected by the consequences of his sin, neither society

not the individual could advance a step. In the absence of the *possibility* of unmerited suffering, not the Spiritual Life only, but all progress of every kind, would be at a standstill.

12

When the great poet, with his wide horizon of human life, and far insight into the Beyond, pronounced "evil" to be "good in the making," was he only prophesying the ultimate triumph of good, or was he proclaiming evil to be a necessity?

That good will finally triumph, and every spiritual "ruin" will be retrieved, we, endued with an "organic" conception of Immortality, may well believe. Loyalty to the Love and Wisdom of God seem to demand it. There is much in the language of Christ and his followers, notably of St. Paul, which suggests it, while our observation of the course and issue of sin even here disposes us to believe that evil is its own destruction. We find, *e.g.*, that selfishness starves the faculty of loving, till, sooner or later, the pangs of that starvation recall to our soul the Father's house, and self is expelled in love for the family of God. Each spiritual penalty is a similar reminder of spiritual function, and so at length the Divine

possibilities of life are set free. We have so many instances of this kind in our little episode of a life here, that we are surely warranted in forming of them some conception of what takes place in the endless epic of the soul.

But does this mean that sin is *necessary*? that without it the epic could never be achieved? that God could not educate His children without placing in them a principle of disobedience to Himself? This is an awful thought, and one from which every spiritual mind must shrink. For if the answer is in the affirmative, if sin is necessary in the attainment of holiness, then our abhorrence of sin and consequently our hold upon the Spiritual Life must both be weakened. It would be folly to resist a foe if we really believed that in conquering us he would develop our resources and establish our security better than we could without him. It is the *disaster* of defeat that stirs our patriotism and provokes our vigilance. Now the notion that sin, after all, is only a process in the final production of good, seems to cheapen our whole spiritual experience. It makes the disease a mere precautionary inoculation; the conquest only a development. Our patriotism is in that

case best served by surrender; our health by contamination.

And therefore this question has, in the Spiritual Life, its very direct and convincing answer. Sin is *not* a necessity of human experience. The *possibility* of sin is, and the very real possibility. The *choice* is a necessity, but the wrong choice is not—otherwise "freedom" were an illusion. And if it is objected: how can we conceive of man endowed with this freedom of choice, and not sinning, the answer is that we could not do so, and should consequently be left in a dark region of conjecture, were it not for the sinless Christ. It is here that the Christ message rings out to the whole world, for no such claim has been made by any other, nor by others on behalf of any other. In other words, Christ is the solitary revelation of what man might be, constituted as he is, with the necessary possibility of evil, with the necessary freedom of choice, yet without consenting to sin.

In this lies Christ's supreme revelation of the Spiritual Life. From the height of His victory we look upon sin as a foe from whom no defeat need be sustained, with whom no parleying should be held. So we shorten our view to the conflict immediately before us, to the sin that

actually besets us, and instead of postponing victory through long vistas of "necessary" defeat, we rise in the strength of that Victory, once we have perceived what is its real significance for us, assured that we are conquerors now and for ever "through Him that loved us."

Engaged in this conquest, our "problem of evil" will be an exceedingly practical one; and in increasing nearness to Christ we shall gain the Spiritual assurance that "the whole Creation, which groaneth and travaileth together in pain," is slowly emerging into the light and glory of the Eternal Will.

VII

THE GUARANTEE OF TRIUMPH

Being Himself in the fullest possession of this spirit-life, and imparting it to us, Christ has given us power to become the sons of God. He is Himself the Bread of that Life; and in the measure that we feed on Him we become what He is.—GEORGE TYRRELL, *Lex Credendi.*

Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the Will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.—T. H. HUXLEY, *Life and Letters*, vol. i, chap. xvi.

1

OUR life, we have found, is in the nature of a paradox, consisting, on the one hand, of baffled endeavour closed by death, and, on the other hand, of capacities of joy and love out of all proportion to any earthly response, and of an actual fortitude and triumph in the presence of which disease and death seem to be the liberation of the spirit, the opening of the gates of a fuller and more "natural" life.

Of this paradox we found an epitome, within the compass of a single individual, in the life and personality of Jesus Christ. An epitome so full, in all respects save one, that even the least occurrence of His life seems to have a representative significance. Through a life of poverty, isolation, and shame, His personality shines with so great a triumph, that the two great rationalists of our own age have attributed to Him, the one "a glimpse of heaven," the other, "a rule of life."

2

Stranger, however, than any impression which we derive of Christ from history, is the impression He has made on history. Of all that ever lived has any had so varied an influence on the race as Jesus Christ? Scarcely any phase of thought and feeling has made its appearance since His time in the western world that has not appealed to His example or precept, and if not actually referring to Him for its authority, has not at least accorded Him a high position among its patrons. It is marvellous when we contemplate the manifold and conflicting phases of human enterprise, each professing to trace its lineage to Him. The Church claims to derive her elaborate system

from Him; on the other hand, haters of heirarchy have appealed to Him as their prototype. He has been placed at the head of the most aristocratic order in the world; on the other hand, He has been accounted the friend of the poor and the oppressed, the champion of democracy, the founder of a new social order. The most rigorous and fanatical society Europe has known has appropriated His name; while those who have been tortured in the secret places of its inquiry have died with His name upon their lips. There has scarcely been a free-thinker who has not appealed to His example, while the most literal of "bibliolaters," as well as the most loyal devotees of authority, have conceived Him to be on their side. In the sixteenth century all Europe was ringing with the antagonisms of those who alike professed Him to be supreme. The sharp antitheta of custom and innovation, reason and emotion, inquiry and indifference, forbearance and intolerance, have each in turn claimed Him. Even among those whose sphere of influence has lain far from "noiseful arms," in the study or the lecture-hall, there has scarcely been one whose restraint or indifference has been sufficiently strong to admit of reticence concerning Jesus. In Eng-

land, at least, it would be safe to affirm that no man who has made his mark as a writer within the last hundred years has left the world without recording his impression of Jesus, and without that impression being as eagerly seized upon and discussed as anything in his memoirs. Among the populace it is the same. It is hardly too much to say that the most absorbing topic with the man in the street—once wages and victuals are disposed of—is Jesus of Nazareth. Given a new theory of Jesus, a crowd can be drawn or the edition of a newspaper exhausted more quickly than by any other means. Sunday by Sunday at the reformer's tree a dozen crowds are listening to as many different expositions, all bearing more or less directly upon the character or life or position of Jesus; and the same holds good of similar assemblies in Paris, New York, and Geneva. Everywhere the interest in Jesus is insatiable.

Now, when we view this influence in all the contrariety in which history presents it to us, does it not seem precisely what we might have predicted on the introduction of a being, spiritually perfect, among imperfect men; men who all shared the possibility of the Spiritual Life, and

yet who had all more or less, and some completely, lost touch with it? In so far as such a being appealed to the goodness in them, they would claim him; and in so far as that goodness was narrow and warped, and falsified by evil, so would his influence be made to appear continually in conflict with itself. We have already seen how His claim was twisted into political pretext in his own day and by His own followers, and the attitude of the Jewish populace at His entry into Jerusalem gives us a key to what has happened again and again throughout the Christian ages, and is happening still. For the spiritual appeal of Christ is a slow and selective process, never forcing the voluntary affections of men, and nowhere claiming to "convert the world" with catastrophical precision.

Now, this conception of a spiritually perfect being exactly tallies with His own claim; the sublime claim in which He centres in Himself His revelation of the Spiritual Life, and the religion that flows from it. The most arresting evidence, therefore, that history bears to Christ's influence, the very inconsistency which, superficially regarded, is so often made a term of reproach, corroborates His own representation of Himself.

3

There is one question which everyone who sincerely wishes to arrive at the truth about Jesus Christ is bound to answer: Was He without sin? On our answer to this question turns not only our attitude towards Christ, but, it is not too much to say, our ultimate attitude towards life itself. It is indeed a question of the most tremendous issues; and some, no doubt, will shrink from raising it. Some will say: Is it not sufficient to admit, as we admitted awhile ago, the moral and spiritual excellence of His character? Why exact anything more? And yet an agnostic attitude is not admissible here, since *doubt* as to Christ's own claim to be sinless has really the force of a negation. Such a negation would render Him the "supreme paradox" indeed, not in the reverent sense of presenting the failure and triumph of human life in unexampled kind, but in the sense of an unrivalled source of moral confusion. He would then fail to carry conviction precisely where the strength of His position required it.

The question demands a plain "Yes" or "No." Jesus Christ says, as of old, "Which of you convinceth me of sin? and if I say truly, why do ye not believe me?"[1]

[1] St. John, viii, 46.

If we reject one part of the record of Jesus we must be ready to say on what grounds we accept any part. The evidence for His sinlessness is just as convincing as the evidence for any fact about Him. It is not advanced once or twice, but is latent in almost every recorded fact of His life. On what ground do we reject one part and retain the rest? Let us be consistent. If we are dissatisfied with the evidence, let us reject it as a whole—including, of course, the testimony of secular history. We have then eliminated Christ from the field of history.

And in that case, two difficulties remain to be faced:

(1) The extraordinary response of the spiritual instinct to the idea of a Sinless Christ and all that flows from that conception, *e.g.*, the case of St. Paul, whose spiritual genius leaped up to recognize in a Sinless Christ the very fact for which the spiritual experience of mankind was waiting.

(2) How do we account for the extraordinary influence which a Sinless Christ has exerted in history, and especially over the minds of those not professedly His followers? In other words, how are we to vindicate the moral sense of mankind?

If, however, we answer the question in the affirmative, if with a full experience of what sin means, we accept Christ's claim to be sinless, we stand confronted with a fact the spiritual importance of which is inestimable.

For Christ now appears before us as the solitary instance of what man might be, constituted as he is, *i.e.*, endowed with perfect freedom, yet never consenting to sin. This gives Him the supreme place in the Spiritual Life. Not only does His life become the rule of ours, but His revelation of the spiritual consciousness, and all that flows from that revelation, becomes obligatory.

4

It must be owned, however, that, in a sense, this leaves us very much where we were before; just as far from actual union with God, just as impotent to fulfil our spiritual destiny, and yield Him His due.

Where is the use of confronting a sick man with a perfect example of health? Such a proceeding would be not only absurd; it would be cruel. Persons who reduce Christ to a mere "example" must be strangely unaware of their own impotence to secure that union with the Father, the possibility of which he made it the object of His life to proclaim.

It is here that the Unitarian conception of Christ, sincere and earnest as it is, utterly breaks down. Christ never regarded Himself as a representative exhibition of human triumph. He never said or implied: "See what I have done; you can do it too." That is foreign to His whole utterance. What He did say was, "Without Me ye can do nothing." What did He mean? Can there be any doubt? He made our union with God dependent on union with Himself, as Himself *the* "Son" of God.

Take every phase of the Spiritual Life which He handled, and this will be found to be the case. Take that of communion with God; Christ bids us pray "in His Name." Take the desire for purity; Christ forgave sins, and claimed that by union with Himself our natures would be restored and purified. He made our love of Him the condition of our love of the Father, and of our doing the Father's will. So He changed the whole moral law from the ethical to the personal; He summed it all up in love. He lifted religion from the dominion of code, and made it the religion of a Person—of Himself. He said: "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "Let not your heart be troubled,

believe in Me,"—all of which is a *non sequitur* from any other point of view than that of personal union with Himself.

These are a few instances of His claim to be the centre of our faith. The gospel accounts are steeped in such.[1] They can have but one significance.

5

It is interesting to observe that the most recent thought about Christ admits the claim to be "Divine," though it denies the singularity of that claim: "Jesus is God, but so are we," is the latest expression of popular thought on the subject.

Was this Christ's meaning when He accepted the tribute of Nathaniel, Peter, Thomas, and others to His Godhead? when He declared on oath before Caiaphas that He was God? when He said that He existed before Abraham? when He claimed to judge the world, and assumed the homage of all mankind? What did Christ's claim to be "Divine" really amount to?

It can only mean one of two things: either

[1] Even if we are not satisfied with the evidence for the Fourth Gospel, "we cannot deny," as the author of "Ecce Homo" points out, "that He used words which have substantially the same meaning."

that He was "Divine" in a *representative* sense —that is to say, as summing up, in Himself, the "divine" possibilities of human nature, or, that He was Divine in a sense that cannot be affirmed of any other creature.

The question raised by these alternatives is not, which of them fits in with *our theory* of the world, or of God, but which did *Christ* mean when He "made Himself equal with God." And when we go to His own words, and the general impression His Personality made on His followers, there can be no doubt in which sense He made that stupendous claim.

If He claimed to be God only as representing the divinity of all men, then His indubitable claim to be Himself the centre and medium of our Spiritual Life in God is reduced to an absurdity. And, again, it is alien to the impression we have of Christ's mind that He should assert the common divinity of all men by claiming equality with the Divine in His own person. A less spiritual genius might have adopted such an expedient—a Philo or Novalis, carried away by an organic vision of the world, and burning to set men free from the trammels of sense; but Christ was far too spiritual, had far too lofty and vivid a recognition of the Divine, to adopt,

as a mere man, the policy of making Himself equal with God. For the nearer the spiritual instinct in man draws to God, the more conscious it is of distance from Him. If Jesus knew Himself to be a man "such as we" His claim to unconditional equality with the Father shows a lack of spiritual instinct inconsistent with everything else we know about Him. The strongest proof, however, that He did not make His claim in a representative sense lies in the fact that He spoke of man's union with God as conditional, and of His own oneness with the Father as *un*conditional and eternal.[1]

6

Hitherto we have spoken of the Divine only as it is found in the spiritual consciousness. In maintaining, however, that the evidence for the Spiritual Life is also evidence for the elements of that consciousness, we have all along supposed that the divinity within us has a real existence. But if so, if the Divine be "in all and through all, and by Him all things exist," one naturally asks: In what *exclusive* sense can it be said of any one person that He is Divine?

[1] Compare St. Matt. xi, 27, St. Luke, x, 22, with St. Matt. x, 32, 33.

This is a most real difficulty to-day with many whose acceptance of the spiritual consciousness has prepared and even rendered them anxious to accept Christ's claims to their full extent. And while it would have been unscientific to let it predispose us against His own claim, yet, having admitted the claim, it is certainly permissible to ask how our faith may be relieved of this difficulty.

It is a difficulty that is met at once by the Spiritual Life. There is a sense in which "we" are "God," as forming part of a universe which God pervades and sustains. But there is also a sense in which as assuredly "we" are *not* "God." And of this sense our spiritual instinct assures us throughout. For to the spiritual sense God is not a mere diffused energy, but Personal Being, Which was, is, and is to come, with all the attributes of such. So that if the word "God" have any spiritual meaning it is impossible to *identify* man with God. Further, the endeavour after union with God, the cry of the heart, the conflict with sin, the joy of deliverance, every spiritual fact in our experience assures us that "He in whom we live and move" demands in His love an even closer communion, and discloses Himself as Parent and Saviour.

The Pantheistic conception of God is, especially in its modern development, a very beautiful one. It is readily seized upon in a day when "organic ideas" are in the air, and when the tendency of thought is towards unification. And so it is not wonderful if in the first flush of this idea men mistake it for a spiritual conception. To feel "in the light of setting suns, and the round ocean and the living air, a Presence which disturbs us with the joy of elevated thought," especially after the cloudy and dark day of rationalism, is certainly a refreshing experience. And to feel, moreover, that the "energy" which science has postulated so far agrees with this impersonal religion as to lend it an air of intellectual respectability, further recommends it. Yet it is a different Presence that the spirit seeks, a light that never was on land or sea, a Voice that speaks in the intimacy of a closer relationship. For while it is true that a King is regnant throughout His kingdom, and his lightest law is nervous with sovereignty, it is also true that He Himself is only known in the audience chamber of His chosen.

There is then no real contradiction involved between the philosophic doctrine of God's sustaining energy, and the spiritual need of an

at-one-ment. It was Christ, whom we admit to be the supreme spiritual genius, who placed "God" and man in this sense in distinct categories, and Himself, in the mystery of the Divine condescension, claimed to be both. His own Person and life are the interpretation of that Being of Whom the spiritual instinct has ever been more or less dimly conscious. And in the presence of these the spiritual consciousness humbly and lovingly confesses: "My Lord and my God."

7

The thing that is plain in Christ is exactly what the Spiritual Life requires: that God—let it be written in its awful simplicity—has passed through our human experience as one of us, to approve our longings and assure our triumph. Hitherto we have been passing from fact to fact; we now view the significance of the whole in which they combine. In so doing we enter again the realm of individual experience, and here at the outset two questions are sure to arrest us: In what sense could a sinless person understand sin? and, What value can the triumph of a divine person have for mankind? These, again, are common difficulties to those who wish to commit themselves confidently to

the Spiritual Life as interpreted by Christ. If they are faced from a spiritual standpoint they will quickly disappear. Only to those who treat them as *a priori* objections to the plain claims of Christ, who say in common parlance: If Jesus were God, how could He have been tempted, and what value can there be in His triumph? and thereupon abandon the whole Christian standpoint as contradictory, are they insuperable. But then such persons commit themselves to a position scientifically unsound. They precede facts not only with theory but with rigid objection. Let them first honestly pass from fact to fact, and possibly while they are doing so what seems at first such a formidable barrier will have disappeared.

For, in the first place, nothing is plainer in the narratives than the fact that the sinless Christ did understand sin; that He sympathized with men and women struggling against it, that He pronounced judgement upon it in terms which no moral teacher has excelled and few indeed have employed. And the reason of this is to be found in the spiritual nature of sin. If sin were what our modern moralists are disposed to imagine, the mere negative of goodness, then a sinless person might indeed be

supposed to look coldly and in bewilderment on all who did not practise goodness. Indeed, we have examples of this in men who, lifted up by their conventional morality, have no pity for weakness and no understanding of frailty. They experience no spiritual struggle within themselves, no "reach exceeding their grasp," no glimpse of "a height that is higher," and therefore the depths also are hidden from them. But their ignorance of sin is not because of their petty perfection, it is because of their lack of spirituality. A spiritual instinct, while absolutely undefiled, could not only perceive sin, but perceive the situation of those under its dominion. We do not require to be burnt to shrink from fire, or to appreciate the peril of those exposed to it, and fly to their rescue.

And, with regard to the moral value for us of Christ's victory, it is certain that, from His very compassion for sinning men and women, He felt in Himself the full force of human "freedom." Do we not, however, commonly mistake the significance of that triumph? For it would not follow that if Christ triumphed as a "mere man" that we should be able to copy His triumph. It does not follow that because my friend has achieved some success, therefore

I can achieve it. So far from gaining anything, as numbers of people suppose, by reducing Christ to our own human level, we lose, and lose everything. For—and this is the heart of the whole matter— His triumph is the guarantee of ours only because, as a divine person, He offers us union with Himself. By the gift of Himself He designs to counteract the bias of our deflected will. How profoundly does the statement fit in with all we know of Christ, with all we know of our own Spiritual Life, and its needs.

8

Is not this the goal to which, when we admit the standpoint of spirituality, and advance from fact to fact, we are inevitably led? Not, certainly, a termination which means the sterilizing of thought, but the attainment of a vantage-ground which, while it affords respite from the "weary weight" of an "unintelligible world," points us onward in the direction of what is our true progress. Of that progress life affords us an indication in the triumph of the spirit over suffering, in the immortal quality of the life that is ours; moreover, an indication which is as plain and strong as is compatible with the condition of our true life, the condition of faith. To ask more would be to require to be consti-

tuted other than we are. In every life, in every common day, to the learned and the ignorant alike there is that plain irrefutable evidence of "the power of an endless life," that "Christ within the race," by means of which, however far we wander, we can never lose touch with our original home. And in the historic life of Christ we see the epitome of all this, sealing the indication with the seal of a Divine guarantee; giving us power to triumph not only over earth's failure and pain, but over the active principle of rebellion in ourselves, and so to yield God His due, and by glorifying Him to fulfil our destiny.

At the same time, let it be especially noted that this involves no parting with our individuality. The whole utterance of Christ emphasizes our individuality. The words "ye" and "thou" occur as often in His utterances as "I" and "Me." And in this He agrees wonderfully with what our spiritual judgement has all along instinctively felt. For just as we know, when we listen to that judgement, that we sin of our own freedom, and believe that by abuse of his freedom Man sinned at first, so it is to our freedom that Christ appeals both when He invites us to "Come unto Him," and when He bids us "remain in His love."

This is very important, for in the first place it rests the full responsibility of our life, even in Christ, upon ourselves. We are free at any moment to break with Him, and to depart. And thus we can never plead exemption from law. Christ therefore strengthens inexpressibly the social bond between man and man. He came "not to destroy law, but to fulfil." And in the second place, it removes Christ from the category of those spiritual systems, notably, that of the Buddha, which base union with God on the sacrifice of individuality. The goal of Buddha is the extinction of all that constitutes personal life, the path being the successive destruction of every desire to assert our personality. Christ claimed to bring Life, and that more abundantly, to be Himself the way to the wondrous individuality revealed in Himself. In Him we are united with the Divine, but consciously, personally; not by absorption, but by co-operation. Therefore, our whole Spiritual Life still rests upon the basis of our personality and turns upon the poles of freedom.

9

Faith has been defined by a great logician[1] as "the mind at rest in an idea," and though to

[1] Whateley.

the spiritual experience it rather seems to be "the heart at rest in God," yet the essence of the definition, the emphasis on "rest" is one of great significance. "Now ye are no longer aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the Household of God"—that is the benediction of faith. There is much which the inquirer, beginning to commit himself to the revelation of Christ, desires to understand: the Atoning Sacrifice, the Incarnation, the Triune Mystery, are still strange to him, yet in the reality of his communion with Christ he will be content to wait till the "doing of the will" shall bring the "understanding of the doctrine." For the response of Christ is the guarantee not only of life but of truth—life and truth, which are the two inseparable forms of apprehending love.[1]

[1] There is, be it observed, a very great difference between difficulty and doubt. "Many persons," writes J. H. Newman, "are very sensitive of the difficulties of Religion; I am as sensitive of them as anyone; but I have never been able to see a connection between apprehending these difficulties, however keenly . . . and on the other hand, doubting the doctrines to which they are attached. *Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.* . . . A man may be annoyed that he cannot work out a mathematical problem, of which the answer is, or is not, given to him, without doubting that it admits of an answer, or that a *certain* particular answer

(given him) is the true one" ("Apologia," chap. v, par. 2). And Dean Church, in a letter of 1889, expresses thus the attitude of intellectual patience: "Without being a sceptic or an agnostic, one may feel that there are questions in the world which never will be answered on this side the grave, perhaps not on the other. It was the saying of an old Greek, in the very dawn of thought, that men would meet with many surprises when they were dead. Perhaps *one* will be the recollection that, when we were here we thought the ways of Almighty God so easy to argue about."

VIII

THE HOME OF THE SOUL

Carlyle quoted with approval that dictum of Novalis, that "my belief becomes indefinitely more certain to me as soon as another shares it."—Dr. Barry, *Heralds of Revolt.*

I can conceive the existence of a church which would be a blessing to the community. A church in which week by week, services should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology, but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just and pure living; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life which is possible for all, though attained by so few; a place in which the man of strife and of business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets, compared with peace and charity.—Huxley, *Method and Results.*

I

PASSING over, in the second of the above quotations, the Professor's limitation of the Church to a "place," and postponing for a moment the "iteration of abstract propositions in theology," let the paragraph commend itself to secularist critics of the Church, and still more

to those who accept in some sort the Spiritual Life, and yet hold aloof from the Society of Christ. What substitute does either secularist or individualist propose for the "great agnostic's" ideal church?

We have already considered, incidentally, the demand for a new religion, and the case of those who confuse modern thought with spiritual truth; let us now turn to those who are debarred from sharing in the corporate life of religion, not so much by intellectual considerations, as by prejudice and ignorance of the aims and conditions of a spiritual society.

Probably, however, if we will admit the plain truth, the principal barrier in our way is ignorance of self. We imagine we can stand alone, that our very experience compels us into nonconformity, and that the "ethical monologue" is the only life now possible to the sincere. All this is very narrow, and yet let it not be hastily condemned. No doubt the egoist masquerades under this guise, yet, where it is sincere, the attitude is easily accounted for. It comes of that increased subjectivity which is ours nowadays as part of the heightened value of the individual. It springs from the same roots as the sensitiveness to suffering which compels us to challenge

life to yield its secret. Thus we are all in the habit of thinking that we have not learned our lesson, or grasped a fact till we have "made it our own." And when we have done so, and imbued it with our own personality, we retreat with it into the "inner consciousness," partly to escape the garish light and partly compelled into reticence by pride. Now, when this assimilated idea is religion, which ever has the most intimate and delicate nature, when, in all likelihood, we have endured bitter throes and long travail in bringing to the birth, it is not strange, far less is it Pharisaic, if we imagine that no one else can share our experiences. This kind of thing again and again comes to light in the lives of those men and women who have been eminent for their revolt from the social life of religion. Further, it so often happens that the soul in its lonely search comes across some little aspect of truth which it exaggerates into a "faith," and mistaking it for the whole, excludes all that transcends it.

While, however, the phenomenon admits of explanation—and, therefore, exculpation—it is none the less deplorable as a morbid condition which cannot fail to bring to the individual injury and loss. We are right in thinking that the

Spiritual Life is something to be appropriated and assimilated; where we make the mistake is in thinking it must be drawn out of ourselves, and nourished and reared in secret. If we carry the same thought into our social and industrial life we shall see in a moment how the plain facts of daily life correct this modern tendency to the cloister. We are born into a ready-made world, where all is, so to speak, in preparation for us, where we have to obey certain laws and customs, and to contribute to the general good, and from this exercise we derive continually a saner and nobler life. Very far from perfect are the arrangements we find on awaking from infancy and looking about us; still, there they are, and to decline to take our part means stagnation and death. Only by coming into touch and keeping in touch with all kinds of agencies, more or less imperfect, can we realize our own life. At first we are only so much assimilating-power, slowly expanding into a fully-fledged individual. The world with all it holds is our foster-mother. The best men are those who are thrown on their own resources, because that means, in our paradoxical tongue, that they are cast on the vast and varied resources of the world.

And what the world is to this mundane life of ours, namely, a fostering home, the Church, in its most elementary aspect, is intended to be to our Spiritual Life. It is the Home of the Soul. The spirit-germ within us has to assimilate not truths only, but a whole life. The whole universe is so much raw material to be changed into a living temple. Here is the priestly office common to all spiritual life. The sacerdotalism that consists in presenting the soul and body, a living sacrifice. For Immortality is not merely that of the individual: in a profound sense it involves also, through the individual, the permanence of "whatsoever things are noble, pure, true, of good report." Thus there is a truth of deepest import in the saying of the poet that "so"—by spiritual function—"the whole round earth is every way bound by gold chains about the feet of God." Of this, the great lay-ministry of the soul, we have seen something already in "The Transforming Life," and be it observed that great as was the spiritual isolation of the Man of Sorrows, He never once allowed the difficulty he found in sharing His ideals and aims to contract His sympathies or paralyze His action.

2

This, however, is not the primary aspect in

which the matter presents itself. True as it is that social intercourse—in the most comprehensive sense—is necessary to the individual's development, it is from the standpoint of duty to the community that the individual is taught to recognize his environment. His entire functions, from his conduct to parents to the widest civic responsibilities, are founded in duty, and should the day come—as seems not unlikely—when another motive is substituted, morality will break down under an optional "self-development." Thanks, however, to certain features in our education up to now, each one of us is bound, by the very fact of his existence, to contribute to the general welfare. Similarly, as a spiritual unit, this is, or should be, the individual's first thought. He is a member of the Church, not for what he can gain, but for what he can *give*; not in the hope of "getting good," but for opportunities of "doing good." For what is the object of his life as a spiritual being? Is it not the endeavour after union with God? The intense, precipitate desire, born of the overwhelming claim of God, to give Him His due? And what else could so aid us in doing this as a society of men and women under the same obligation? Further, the very "imperfections"

of the Church, instead of proving a hindrance, minister to this end. In an organization where no demand was made on our forbearance, our tolerance, our charity, how could we possibly learn to forgo self, and meet the Great Claim? A perfect Church could be of no use except to the "finished and finite clod."

That this is not sufficiently recognized by those who profess Church membership is, unfortunately, only too true. Too often they reveal a complete inversion of the aim of their existence. They "go to get good," and if they are not satisfied, if their pet theories are not commended, their prejudices indulged, their tastes consulted, they "go elsewhere." And so the world outside often finds that for prejudice and resentment, for all that is petty and ugly and ungracious in human life, religious people have no equal. What wonder! The whole existence of such people is a spiritual perversion! They do not mean it. Very likely they have never been taught to see in Church life anything but the credit side of a benefit club. Their religious conceptions have taken their colours from our "national independence," from "the dissidence of dissent, and the protestantism of the Protestant religion." Their

spirituality hardly amounts to more than "other-worldliness." They only desire to save their life —not to lose it.

Such ignorance can only be dispelled by clear and persistent teaching—teaching on the lines of Christ and His Apostles—and is thus in itself an argument for the maintenance of a church that puts the needs of man second to the claims of God.

3

"Yes," some will say, "but can we not find in the ordinary duties of life the scope for fulfilling this need? Was it not the Christian poet who wrote:

> The trivial round, the common task
> Will furnish all we need to ask,
> Room to deny ourselves?

Why form a society within society? Why add to duties which already tax our utmost powers? Nay, more, they will urge, does not the Church absorb into herself a great deal of energy that might be usefully distributed over the area of civic and domestic life? Would it not be more in accordance with Christ's teaching if the money and time given to the maintenance of Church life were devoted to philanthropic objects? Would not our religion be more to the

purpose if we looked upon humanity as our Church, and "whatsoever our hand findeth to do" as our "reasonable service"?

The strong ethical currents of the last century, the force with which men like Carlyle and Ruskin aroused the general indifference of the Church at that time to social and industrial needs, have strengthened the voice of those who would thus absorb the Church in the State. And, indeed, the above contention bears a certain superficial resemblance to many passages in the New Testament, and to not a little of Christ's own teaching. The question, however, to ask is: has this contention any really spiritual force? The love of humanity, the hope of progress, the desire for amelioration and improvement—all these are included in the scheme of a spiritual religion, but the Spiritual Life itself is a response not to humanity, but to God. If that is not the case, if it does not bring to bear on mundane things a force which they do not contain, then it may truly be neglected as superfluous; but if it does, then the sanest, as well as most solemn, injunction ever uttered was to "seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness," with the assurance that the temporal welfare would flow from that seeking.

For without some "outward breathing *type*," what would become of truth, and holiness, and love? How long would the spiritual desire to yield God His due survive the welter of our manifold activities? What would become of all that is most spiritual in the legacy of ages, unless it were handed down through recognized channels? How should individuals strive to live the life of Christ, and not be drawn thereby into a common cause? How could devotion—the sense and sight of the world to come—have any virility, indeed any reality, unless publicly practised; and how could this better be done than by taking Christ as the centre of such devotion, and weaving into the fabric of it all that has proved spiritually true, helpful, and beautiful, traditions from the far past, prayers that have escaped human lips in their agony or their triumph, symbols that are the silent language of praise, actions that bring the whole body into the sacred symbolism of worship? Let us not say where this is poor and faulty; let us say how it can be bettered.

The Church is man's response to Christ. We saw a little while back[1] how closely in His ministry the attention to material needs was

[1] Essay IV.

interwoven with spiritual service; and so we find that the early response to Him, the Church of the New Testament, has an ethical import inseparable from that spiritual response. They are inseparable to-day, and to sunder the civic and social ideals of Christianity from the response out of which they grew, to constitute the Church one of precept and action without the vitality that gave it birth, would have much the same result as we have seen to accrue when the portrait of Christ is robbed of its spiritual features. A secularist Church would be as impotent as is the secularist Jesus.

4

The Church, then, stands for the spiritual interpretation of life. It must be obvious, however, that any interpretation that is of value, has to be kept clear from misunderstanding. When Professor Huxley, in that most interesting admission which heads this section, ruled out of the services of his ideal church "the iteration of abstract propositions in theology," it may be assumed that he was referring to the Creed. In desiring to exclude this he voiced the feeling of a large number to-day who hold aloof from the Church, and do so mainly because of the "iteration" to which they are subjected. Now

what exactly is it that constitutes the Creed such a rock of offence? The Professor calls it a body of "abstract propositions"; it is difficult to know why the term "abstract" was chosen, but by no means let us cavil. The professor's meaning is clear enough; what he objects to is a body of theological statements being introduced into a "service." But is not the "Lord's Prayer" a body of theological statements? At once the reply is forthcoming: "No, the Lord's Prayer is a devotional exercise." And why may not the Creed claim to be a devotional exercise? As a matter of fact that is precisely what it is. No devout churchman ever takes it on his lips as a body of theological propositions, but as the utterance of that spiritual bond which binds him and the whole Church to Christ.[1]

Surely those who find the Creed repugnant would find the Lord's Prayer, or any other ex-

[1] "When one makes profession of this or that doctrine of the Church . . . they (outsiders) cannot take in that he is in earnest; for they think, forsooth, that these points ought to be his very difficulties, and are at most nothing more than trials of his faith, and that he gets over them by putting force on his reason, and thinks of them as little as he can; and they do not dream that truths such as these have a hold upon his heart, and exert an influence on his life."—J. H. Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, Sermon 1.

pression of devotion, equally repugnant if they regarded it as, for some strange reason, they regard the Creed, *i.e.*, from a purely intellectual standpoint as "abstract propositions in theology." And yet they find in the Lord's Prayer, if nothing more, a certain consolation and uplifting, and would probably rather part with any other form of words in the language than that sublime address. How is it then that they do not similarly regard the Creed? Is it not owing to a want of touch with the historic life of the Church? Let us recollect that this Creed in its simplest form was brought into being by Christ Himself,[1] was by Him commanded to be used,[2] and was the spiritual symbol which His followers immediately employed in establishing His Society.[3] Imagine the fervour of devotion with which they who first found in Christ the response their spiritual instinct craved uttered that symbol: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Why is its use one whit less devout to-day? It is not—by those who similarly respond to Him, and to whom the most solemn and uplifting part in public worship is when they are per-

[1] St. Mark, viii, 29; St. Matt. xvi, 16, 17.
[2] St. Matt. xxviii, 19.
[3] Acts, viii, 37.

permitted to confess Him in His person and work.

For all that the Creed contains is an *extension* of the name Jesus Christ, a necessary extension owing to the frequent tendencies in early Christian history to misunderstand His nature and claims, and the truth He revealed. Each addition has to the devout mind all the glow of a triumph won in the interest of what most vitally concerns our race. While the fact that the very same tendencies to misunderstanding are observable to-day warrants, if nothing else did, the continuance of its use.

5

Is it not, to the earnest and reflective mind, an extraordinary thing that Christian thought should never have been misled into conceiving Christ as other than that which the spiritual consciousness requires? Throughout the ages, with all their intellectual unrest, Christ remains what we have seen He claimed to be, what the spiritual instinct of man rejoicingly acknowledged Him at the first, without a single detraction, without a single addition to obscure the Friend of Sinners, the Lover of the Soul. And to what is this owing? Humanly speaking,

it is due entirely to the Creed. There are those who say with a sneer that "Christ is church property," and much rhetoric is expended in our market-places over the disciples who have stolen away Jesus from the memorials of human greatness. But what would men have? Do they want Christ for themselves? He is theirs, if they will. But the truth is, they want Him according to their own narrow conceptions and prejudices. They want the "ethical teacher," the "flower of humanity," the "social prophet," exactly as, in the first ages, men wanted an "emanation of Deity," a "man with a divine soul." They want some one whom they can place among their intellectual gods with Plato and Buddha, and Shakespeare. But—there is no such person. None such ever existed, except as a figment of the secularist imagination.

"Ye will not come unto *Me* that ye might have life," was the sorrowing conclusion of the rejected Christ. And over those to-day, who prefer their own dreams and desires to historic fact, the sad admission is repeated. They are not consciously insincere in their rejection, but they are not true to themselves. They are false to their own spirituality, therefore they are false to Christ.

6

Much of what has been said in a previous essay[1] in connection with the intellectualizing of religion applies here and need not be repeated. It is surely only fair to expect, that, *as a statement*, the Creed should be examined in relation to what it seeks to express. It is quite inadequate to express "modern thought"; it does not undertake to express such. As the reader will have gathered in the foregoing pages, a spiritual faith breaks with "modern thought" in certain most important particulars. Let this be clear, and then let the inquirer choose between the inconsistent surmises of a speculation yet in its infancy, and the divine instinct that speaks within him. It is assumed, however, that those addressed in this essay are on a "plane of assent." In that case let them approach the Creed in the spirit of devotion to the Master, and reverence for its historic significance, and they will soon find that instead of being an obstacle it is one of the greatest helps in living the Spiritual Life.

7

Before quitting this subject a word may be permitted to those who are consciously in

[1] See Essay V.

the Apostles' fellowship and doctrine. We have called this fellowship the "Home of the Soul"; are we doing all we can to give it a homely character? Are we making it a "fellowship" in the sense in which the Son of Man companied with all sorts and conditions of men? Are our sympathies open to the doubter, the penitent, the men and women who "would see Jesus"? Is our churchmanship that of a society, or merely of a building? Does it mean that we are solacing our souls with services and prayers, soft music, and tranquil hope, and all the time living lives which are in no way different from those whose ideals are "frankly pagan," and whose "religion" is that of Nature or literature, or some other sensuous dream? Is our social standard Christ and the Christlike, or is it the Antichrist of respectability? How many a man would have found the Church a home if the coldness, selfishness, insincerity, and lifelessness of some of its members had not repelled him!

It is not to festivities and "recognition" that men look to bring them within the Church, but to sympathy and the assurance that those within it have at heart the same cause which brings the seekers to their doors. This is most urgently to be remembered because so many

to-day think to recommend religion by almost identifying it with pleasure. They do not see how they give religion away. True it is that the Spiritual Life is a thing of unutterable joy. All health is. But as health has its labours and burdens, so has the immortal life; and there is a sense in which, the more religious men are, the harder they find life to be. There is an "enduring of hardship": "He that will live godly in Christ Jesus *must* suffer persecution." Nor will any who are men recoil from such a prospect once it is put plainly before them. Let the Church appeal to men as soldiers, confident of victory, true, but facing the foe. Let her lift again the Cross, and raise the iron cry, "Love not pleasure; love God." But let her, above all, be constant to this within her own life.

In all the joy of spiritual communion let us never forget that the Man of Sorrows is the Man for men. In nothing but in God do we realize our heaven here. Apart from Him, our ceaseless duty is renunciation. The "note" of the Church in this age needs to be austerity. In her sleepless, in her passionate, spirituality, lies the only hope for the world. Saintliness must be restored. Prayer must be a habit.

Self-denial the rule of life. That old familiar phrase, "living to God," must be quickened again, not on our lips, but in our lives. We have nothing to do on earth or in Heaven but to serve God.

IX

THERE REMAINETH A REST

He hath set Eternity in their hearts.
—*Eccles.* iii, 11.

AT the outset of this fragmentary attempt to disclose the open secret of the heart, we witnessed the vague unrest of our day. We heard the challenge that rings out amid the pathos of life. We saw men stumbling in the dark for lack of some clear conviction, eagerly inquiring whether life itself yielded any indication that it is worth the living.

This unrest we found to be due to a quickening of sensibility, which not only rendered all the facts of life more vivid, but made a greater demand on our moral perception than our intelligence satisfied. The intellectual movement of the preceding age, and the secular mysticism of the present day alike, failed to penetrate life with any unifying fact.

In the active world around us we saw that

this increase of sensibility was likely to prove a curse rather than a blessing, placing, as it tends to do, excessive emphasis on the external conditions of life, and intensifying sensuous enjoyment as it deepens the consciousness of misery and pain. Also that if philanthropy prevailed over mere hedonism, it was powerless to remove the bulk of misery, all but powerless in the presence of suffering, wholly powerless in the face of perversity and death.

And then from the dark midst of the riddle of the world, from the very suffering, sensitiveness to which had induced the problem, came the first indication of light and hope. For in the instinct to triumph manifested under so much of human woe, we saw, as it were, heaven opened, and Immortality, our proper life, itself a world within a world, passing calmly on its way, Suffering and Adversity its angelic guides, and Death the opener of the Gate.

Then for the first time we considered the Man of Sorrows, and heard Him say: "I have overcome." In His life we saw the bitterest lot of all human humiliation; the greatest injustice of a world awry, for He who was acquitted at Pilate's bar, and is acquitted for ever, was given a criminal's death. No miscarriage of justice

can exceed this. No sorrow was like unto His sorrow. Yet neither can any triumph exceed that which His Personality presents. As we pause before it, as we look upon it at first with wonder, and then with kindling love, we recognize there, only in richer quality and abundance, all those elements which make death but a circumstance of life. It is good that we saw them before, good that life in feebler accents proclaimed itself alive for evermore, good that, looking on the life we know, we should find that "He hath placed eternity in their heart," but thus prepared and led to Him, we found Immortality brought to light. Invited into the recesses of His inner life by the Voice that saith, "Come unto Me," we found the shaping and transfiguring power of the spiritual consciousness, the full communion with the Father, the only dwelling-place of reality amid the shifting sands of worlds and ages. And as we pondered these things surely in our own hearts, a stirring as of some diviner spring than sets earth singing assured us that we also may be partakers of this hope; that the victory is for us, that we too may become incorporated in that spiritual body which is Christ; that the Love which so could stoop, so clothe Himself

in our nature to suffer and die, has us in His keeping, and does already in His Risen Life restore the interrupted harmonies of earth.

Surely, in a sense vivid and fresh as it was when the words first were uttered: "He is our peace"

E la sua voluntade è nostra pace,

on earth as in the Beyond, surely *here* and now "there remaineth a rest" a centre of serenity, in which we may live calmly and securely our little round of life. Surely in the life so manifested, if men would but live it, all the injustice that flows from "man's inhumanity to man," all the unmerited pain of sin, the social impoverishment of greed, the foul distortions of lust, the problems which we first make and then endure, would dissolve in tears of self-surrender —ay, if need be, in blood—before the Cross of Him Who gave *Himself*.

And that burden of inevitable pain with which God has fenced our spirit as by fire, shall we revolt against it and call it unjust, when its liberating issues are so plain? We do not thus regard the pangs of birth, or the sorrows of a wise experience. Life is the justification of travail, and the soul of suffering.

We know not what surprises the pursuit of free inquiry has in store, but this we know: it never can belie the Life that is within. Never, in all conceivable reaches of speculation, is it possible to remove "eternity" out of "their hearts." As there are some phases of sleep that so closely resemble the death of the body that men have difficulty in deciding whether life is present, so there may be some the fast slumber of whose spirit casts doubt upon its existence; yet these will never be able to deny the presence of a Spiritual Life in those in whom it is active, and the more the intellectual usurps the spirit's place within themselves the more bound will they be to admit the testimony of phenomena which they are unable to reproduce. Whether the "sleeper" "awake" or not, there is the "light." The Crucifix may be thrown down, as in France to-day, from the place it held in courts of justice, it is only to prove that man, in his superficiality, casts away the ultimate sanction of virtue and of judgement, to raise it again when reason is restored. Secularism may "invade all departments of life," spiritual progress may be interrupted years or even ages. Such things have happened before, and when man loses touch with the spiritual

they will happen again. The "sweet *naïveté*" of pagan conceptions may usher in the sweet simplicity of the jungle, the frank bestiality of the beast. All these may befall us in their season, yet the Spiritual Life can, if need be, contemplate all, not indeed unmoved by compassion, but itself undismayed. It has encountered more appalling contingencies, for did it not encounter Calvary?

It is not, however, on such a prospect that the spiritual eye is fixed. It is not concerned with forestalling evil, but rather with rejoicing in good. A more human theory might suffer agitation; the solicitude of the humanitarian may very well be a fine torture. Pessimism is itself a fretful clinging about the skirts of reason. "My peace I give unto you," said Christ, "My rest, My joy"; and the centre of that serenity was, and is, the fact of goodness present in man. His eye stripped off the obscurities of evil and read the heart clear. There is no other tranquillizing vision. As in suffering we see the spirit passing on its way, so we see a new creation forming in the womb of time.

It is here that, regarding the result of Christ's influence to-day, we find something strikingly reminiscent of the paradoxical character of His

own life—in all save error and sin—and of the Christian ages. Which country in Europe, professing to be Christian, reminds us at all, in its policy, its legislation, its social character, of the Prophet of Nazareth? In what assembly, among the thousands meeting in His name, shall we find any collective representation of His spirit? And yet while there is no nation or church or party that can claim solely or even as a whole to represent Him, everywhere there are those "who best bear His mild yoke" and "serve Him best," everywhere refined and beautiful natures, both manly and womanly, who learn of Him. In every nation under heaven this is so, in every church and congregation, and among the multitudes who see Him afar off. In many cases such are not recognized as Christians at all, and some are themselves unaware Who it is that by affinity is their Master. They are of those who said, "Sir, when saw we *Thee* hungry or in prison or destitute, and ministered unto *Thee*?" Yet these are they who express and perpetuate His victory, who in that same transforming spirit that has made squallid Nazareth beautiful with holiness, make common duty and unlovely circumstance divine with fidelity and love. These are they who

overcome as He overcame. They walk unseen. To themselves they are not significant. In history they have no name. And the world, whose eyes are gross and holden, is like to take no account of them, to hear only the clamour of its own noises, to feel that Christ has withdrawn, leaving no successors, and that His pledge to "make all things new" is vain. Only now and then is it given us, in some such life of obscurity and many sorrows, to pierce the veil that hides not heaven, but an earth redeemed, and place it on record, as it was of old: "I saw a multitude which no man could number."

THE END

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